WHAT IF...? DARK
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MARVEL

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What If? Classic:
The Complete Collection Vol. 1
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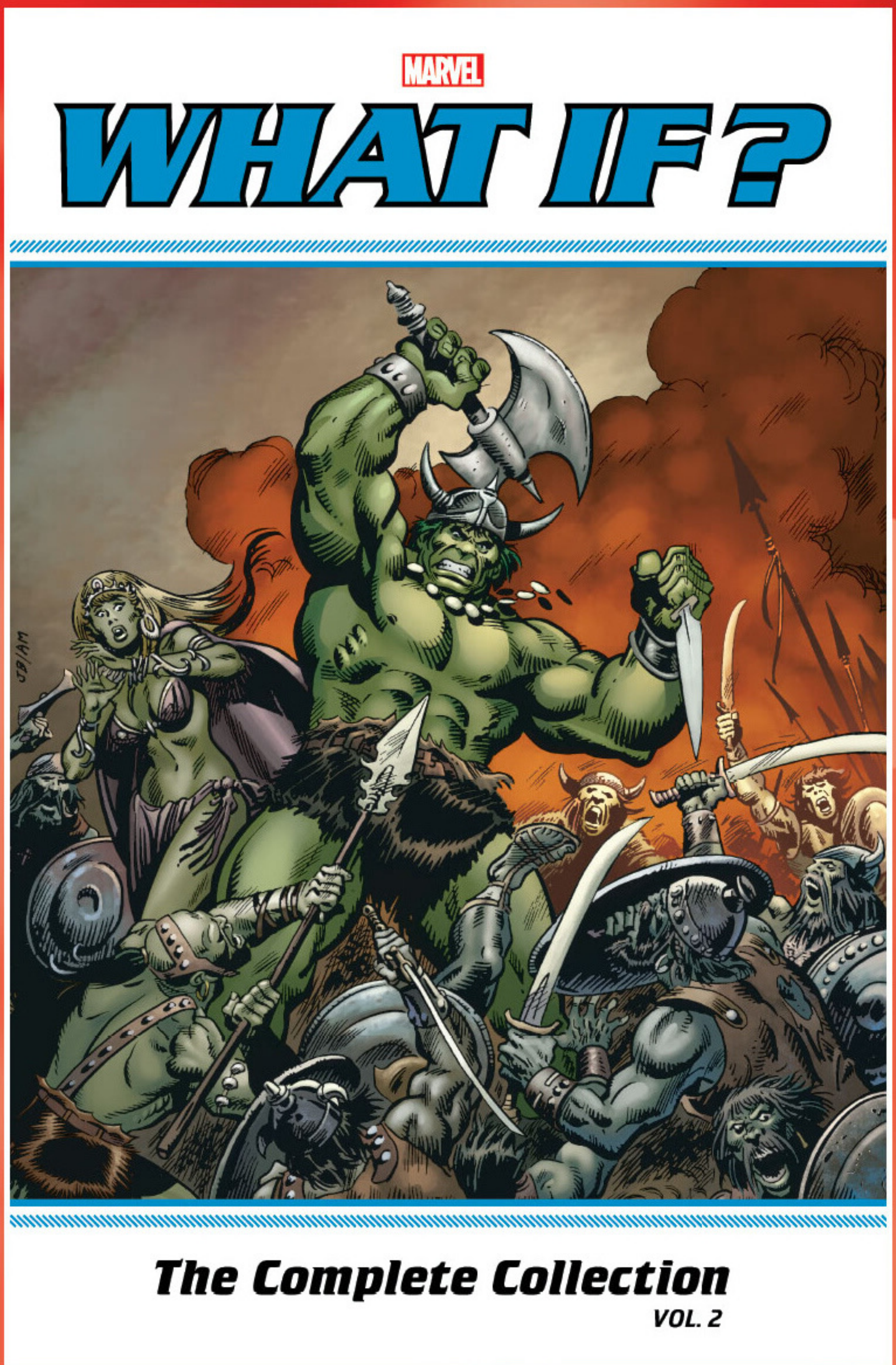

What If? Classic:
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WHAT IF...? DARK

The Marvel Universe is filled with infinite possibilities. One small choice can change the course of history and set the universe on any number of different paths. What if those choices, those moments, turned the situation...dark?

WHAT IF...? DARK

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WHAT IF...? DARK
LOKI

PROLOGUE:
WHEN AT LAST THE TIME CAME, THOR WAS DEEP IN THE BOWELS OF THE KINGDOM OF THE TROLLS...
...BATTLING A FOE AS POWERFUL AS HE, ULIK!
AND AS THEIR FURIOUS BATTLE RAGED, LOKI, ADOPTED SON OF ODIN BUT A SCION OF FROST GIANTS, LAY HIDDEN NEARBY.
THOR HATH FORGOTTEN MJOLNIR IN HIS DESIRE TO BATTLE THE TROLL.
SO BE IT.
MJOLNIR IS MINE!!
AND MIDGARD WILL BE MY SANCTUARY.
FTZAPPT

WITH THE ENCHANTMENTS I STOLE FROM THE NORN QUEEN, COMBINED WITH MY OWN MATCHLESS POWER...
...I HAVE AT LAST BROKEN ODIN'S DAMNABLE CURSE. I CAN WIELD THE HAMMER!
HEY! WHERE'D YOU COME FROM? I COULDA SWORN THERE WAS NO ONE THERE A SECOND AGO.
WHAT'S IN THE PACKAGE? WE'VE HAD A LOT A ROBBERIES IN THIS AREA AND... COOL! A HAMMER-- LIKE THE ONE THOR CARRIES.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO A COSTUME PARTY, WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO?
CAREFUL. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO LIFT IT.
WHY NOT? IF YOU CAN CARRY IT, I DON'T FIGURE--
HEY!!
IT'S LIKE IT WEIGHS A TON!
A TON?
HOW LAUGHABLE YOUR ESTIMATE.
YOU...YOU LIFTED IT LIKE IT WAS NOTHING!
WHAT? THE HAMMER JUST BECAME A WALKING STICK AGAIN!! THAT CAN ONLY MEAN--
JUST MY LUCK TO BE STUCK WITH A TWO-BIT MAGICIAN.
GET OUTTA HERE! GO PRACTICE YOUR CHEAP TRICKS ON SOMEBODY ELSE'S BEAT!

KARNILLA'S SPELL HAS RETURNED US TO EARTH. AND SOMEWHERE CLOSE TO LOKI.
WE MUST BE CAREFUL, THOR. LOKI'S TREACHERY KNOWS NO BOUNDS. AND WITHOUT YOUR HAMMER, YOU'RE STUCK IN YOUR MORTAL GUISE OF DONALD BLAKE...
GREETINGS, STEPBROTHER! IS THIS WHAT THOU DOST SEEK?
YOU SHOULD HAVE KEPT IT CLOSER TO YOUR HEART!
UGGGKK!
MY LOVE!
LOKI! I'LL KILL YOU FOR THIS!
I THINK NOT, SIF.
BETTER THAT TWO SUCH ARDENT LOVERS SHOULD DIE... TOGETHER!
KRACCKKT

THE DIE IS CAST! LOKI'S HOUR HAS COME AT LAST.
"THE SONG OF MJOLNIR... IN MINOR..."
A TALE OF DEATH & DESTRUCTION BROUGHT TO YOU BY:
WALTER SIMONSON (WRITER) & SCOT EATON (PENCILER)!
PLUS:
CAM SMITH & SCOTT HANNA (INKERS)
ANDREW DALHOUSE (COLORIST)
AND VC's TRAVIS LANHAM (LETTERER)!
GOODBYE, DR. BLAKE. KISS THE VALKYRIES FOR ME WHEN YOU REACH VALHALLA.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. YOU DIDN'T DIE IN BATTLE. YOU WON'T BE GOING TO VALHALLA. I'M NOT CERTAIN ABOUT THE LADY.
BE SURE TO GIVE MY GREETINGS TO HELA THEN AND TELL HER YOU'RE A GIFT FROM HER LOVING FATHER-- THE SLAVE SHE HAS ALWAYS DESIRED.
NOW! DESPAIR AND DIE!!
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE GRATEFUL TO ODIN FOR ANYTHING...

...BUT THE SPELL HE CAST ON THOR TO CREATE HIS MORTAL IDENTITY WAS INDEED A BLESSING... FOR ME!
I MUST MOVE QUICKLY BEFORE ODIN LEARNS WHAT HAS TRANSPIRED HERE.
AND BEFORE THE NORN QUEEN CAN RECALL HER "BORROWED" POWER.
NO DOUBT SHE HAS RETURNED TO HER FORTRESS HERE.
A SIMPLE SPELL OF SEEING WILL REVEAL WHAT I NEED TO--
"AH, AS I SUSPECTED. ALREADY SHE IS ATTEMPTING TO RECOVER HER STOLEN ENCHANTMENTS.
"THOUGH WE HAVE BEEN ALLIES IN THE PAST..."
...THE TIME HAS COME TO SHATTER OLD ALLEGIANCES!
AND THANKS TO HER OWN POWER, I HAVE JUST THE INSTRUMENT!

ODIN'S CURSE!! THE HAMMER RETURNS NOT TO MY HAND!
I'LL HAVE TO DIG IT OUT.
I SEE THE PROBLEM OF KARNILLA IS SOLVED. THE NORN'S SORCERY I TOOK IS NOW MINE... PERMANENTLY.
LIGHTNING.
HAHA HAHAHA HAHA!
ALREADY THE HAMMER RECOGNIZES ITS NEW MASTER!
FTZAPPT!

MOMENTS LATER...
HERE IN MY OWN FORTRESS, WHERE MY POWERS ARE AT THEIR PEAK, I SHALL LEARN WHAT I NEED TO KNOW.
I HAD NOT PLANNED TO ATTACK ASGARD SO SOON, BUT THERE IS NO HELP FOR IT NOW.
TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE. BALDER WILL BE FURIOUS AT THE DEATH OF KARNILLA. SHE HAD ALWAYS LOVED HIM, AND I SUSPECT THAT THAT LOVE WAS RETURNED.
BUT HIS WRATH WILL BE AS NOTHING COMPARED TO ODIN'S WHEN *HE* LEARNS WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIS PRECIOUS SON.
I MUST MOVE QUICKLY BEFORE EITHER REALIZES THE INEVITABLE HAS ALREADY BEGUN.
LET ODIN'S IMAGE APPEAR BEFORE ME.

"HOW LIKE MY STEPFATHER. HE HAS SOUGHT OUT A SEERESS TO TRY TO UNCOVER THE FUTURE.
"HE WOULD HAVE DONE BETTER TO HAVE LOOKED TO THE PAST.
"WHAT'S THIS? I SEE MINE OWN IMPRISONMENT AND TORTURE! I SEE AN AX AGE, A WOLF AGE, LEADING TO THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL...
"...AND FURTHER BACK, THE CAUSE. THE DEATH OF BALDER FROM AN ARROW OF MISTLETOE SHOT BY HIS BROTHER HODR, APPARENTLY GUIDED BY MINE OWN FINE HAND.
"CLEARLY, HIS DEATH HASN'T YET HAPPENED, SO IT'S A MATTER OF TIMING."
AND EQUALLY CLEARLY, THERE'S NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT.

THE DEEP WOODS OF HODDMIMIR'S HOLT SHOULD SUPPLY MY NEEDS.
HERE, THE MISTLETOE OF DESTINY.
IT IS BUT A FRAIL AND FRAGILE PLANT.
ONCE AGAIN, MJOLNIR SHALL AID ME.
A SIMPLE BLESSING WITH ITS POWER AND THE MISTLETOE SHALL UNDERGO THREE YEARS OF GROWTH IN A SINGLE SECOND.
A SIMPLE GESTURE...
...AND BEHOLD, THIS INNOCENT PLANT HAS NOW BECOME THE VERY SPEAR OF DESTINY.
BALDER, THY LIFE IS MINE.

BEGGAR'S ALLEY WILL HIDE ME UNTIL THE MOMENT.
AND A SPELL WILL KILL ANY WHO SEEK TO SEND WORD TO ODIN AFTERWARD.
LORD BALDER! THERE IS NEWS FROM THE REALM OF THE NORNS. I CAN SCARCELY BEAR TO SAY...
SPEAK.
THE FORTRESS OF THE NORN QUEEN HAS BEEN DESTROYED. RUMOR SAYS THAT QUEEN KARNILLA WAS CAUGHT IN THE RUIN AND DID NOT SURVIVE.
IF THY WORDS BE TRUE, IT CAN ONLY BE LOKI'S DOING! HIS HEART ALONE WOULD HARBOR THE MALICE TO DO SUCH A THING!
YET THIS DEED WOULD SEEM TO DEMONSTRATE POWER BEYOND EVEN HIS COMPASS.
I SHALL RIDE TO SEE FOR MYSELF, AND WOE TO LOKI IF I DISCOVER--!
ARRGGG!
THUPP
MY LORD!!

BALDER IS DEAD!
AND THERE IS NO TRACE OF THE ASSASSIN. NOTHING SAVE A FADING LIGHT IN BEGGAR'S ALLEY.
WE MUST GET WORD TO LORD ODIN FORTHWITH!!
AND AS A STUNNED MESSENGER RACES TOWARD THE IMPERIAL PALACE...
...ON A DISTANT STONY ISLAND AMIDST THE ICY STORM-TOSSED SEA...
'TIS DONE! HAHAHAHA HAHAHAHAHA HAHA!!!
BALDER'S DEATH HATH BEEN ACCOMPLISHED.
I HAVE SET IN MOTION FORCES THAT NO ONE, NOT EVEN ODIN, CAN HALT!
THE STAGE IS SET! THE PLAYERS ARE READY! THE TRAGEDY IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!
THE LIGHTNING GROWS STRONGER!
MJOLNIR DOTH SEEK TO ENLARGE MY OWN POWER!

BUT I FORGET MY MANNERS. I MUST GREET THE SOLE INHABITANT OF LYNGVI.
HAIL, GREAT FENRIS WOLF. HOW FARES THE SON OF MY HEART?
A WAILING HOWL SHAKES THE ISLAND TO ITS FOUNDATIONS.
INDEED. AND THE GODS HAVE EVEN DRIVEN A SWORD THROUGH YOUR JAW.
MY POOR BOY. THE TIME OF RECKONING IS AT HAND. LOKI AND HIS CHILDREN SHALL HAVE THEIR DUE.
WAIT! STAND STILL, THAT I MIGHT CONCEAL MYSELF IN THY SHADOW.
I CAN FEEL THEM.
ODIN'S RAVENS ARE CIRCLING.

SKRAKT
THIS WILL BE THEIR LAST FLIGHT.
NO LONGER WILL THEY SPY FOR ODIN, NOR BRING HIM NEWS OF THE NINE WORLDS.
WE WOULDN'T WISH TO ALARM HIM PREMATURELY.
MY SON, IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO FULFILL YOUR DESTINY.
I RELEASE YOU.
NOW GO! SEEK OUT THE ALL-FATHER...
...AND KILL HIM!
I SHALL FOLLOW SHORTLY, BUT FIRST, I SHALL SUMMON OUR ALLIES TO WAR!
FOR A MOMENT, FATHER AND SON SNARL AT EACH OTHER...
...AND THEIR SNARLS ARE IDENTICAL.

THEN, WITH A FINAL HOWL, FENRIS WOLF...
...IS GONE...
...WHILE ON THE ISLAND BEHIND HIM...

'TWILL BE EASIER TO ACCOMPLISH MY GOAL AS A *MULTIPLE.*

AND IN SHORT ORDER...
MARSHAL THE FROST GIANTS, UTGARD-LOKI! ASGARD'S GREATEST DEFENDER IS NO MORE, AND THE TIME HAS COME TO STRIKE DOWN OUR OPPRESSORS.
RAISE THE DEAD, HELA, MY DAUGHTER. YOUR BROTHER HAS GONE TO KILL ODIN, AND OUR TIME IS AT HAND!
JORMUNGAND, AWAKEN! YOUR GREATEST ENEMY, THOR, IS DEAD! RISE UP FROM THE SEA AND BRING DEATH AND DESTRUCTION TO ASGARD.
MIGHTY SURTUR! THE HOUR LONG FORETOLD IS AT HAND!

Asgard. The gates at the end of the fabled Rainbow Bridge...
...and the guardpost where Heimdall the vigilant ever stands watch.
A shroud of fog envelops the far end of the Bifrost!
It can only be a sorcerous attack by our enemies!
I must sound the alarm--!!!
KRACHT
Not just yet, noble Heimdall.

PERMIT US TO ANNOUNCE... OURSELVES!

THE SURPRISE IS TOTAL...
...AND THE DESTRUCTION UNIMAGINABLE...
...AS ANCIENT HATREDS EXPLODE ACROSS THE WAYS AND BYWAYS OF THE CITY.
THE *PALACE!* THEY'RE TRYING TO REACH *ODIN'S THRONE!!*

AND THERE'S BEEN NO WORD FROM HUGINN AND MUNINN?
NO, MY LORD. EVEN FARSIGHTED HEIMDALL HAS BEEN UNABLE TO FIND YOUR RAVENS.
I LIKE IT NOT. POST ADDITIONAL SENTRIES ON THE WALLS AND--!!
KERASSSH
FENRIS!
UNFETTERED!!

I SPARED YOU ONCE, WOLF.
THIS TIME, I SHALL REDUCE YOU TO DUST!
I THINK NOT, STEP-FATHER!
LOKI!
I KILLED THOR...
...AND NOW IT IS YOUR TURN!
FENRIS!
SNAPPT

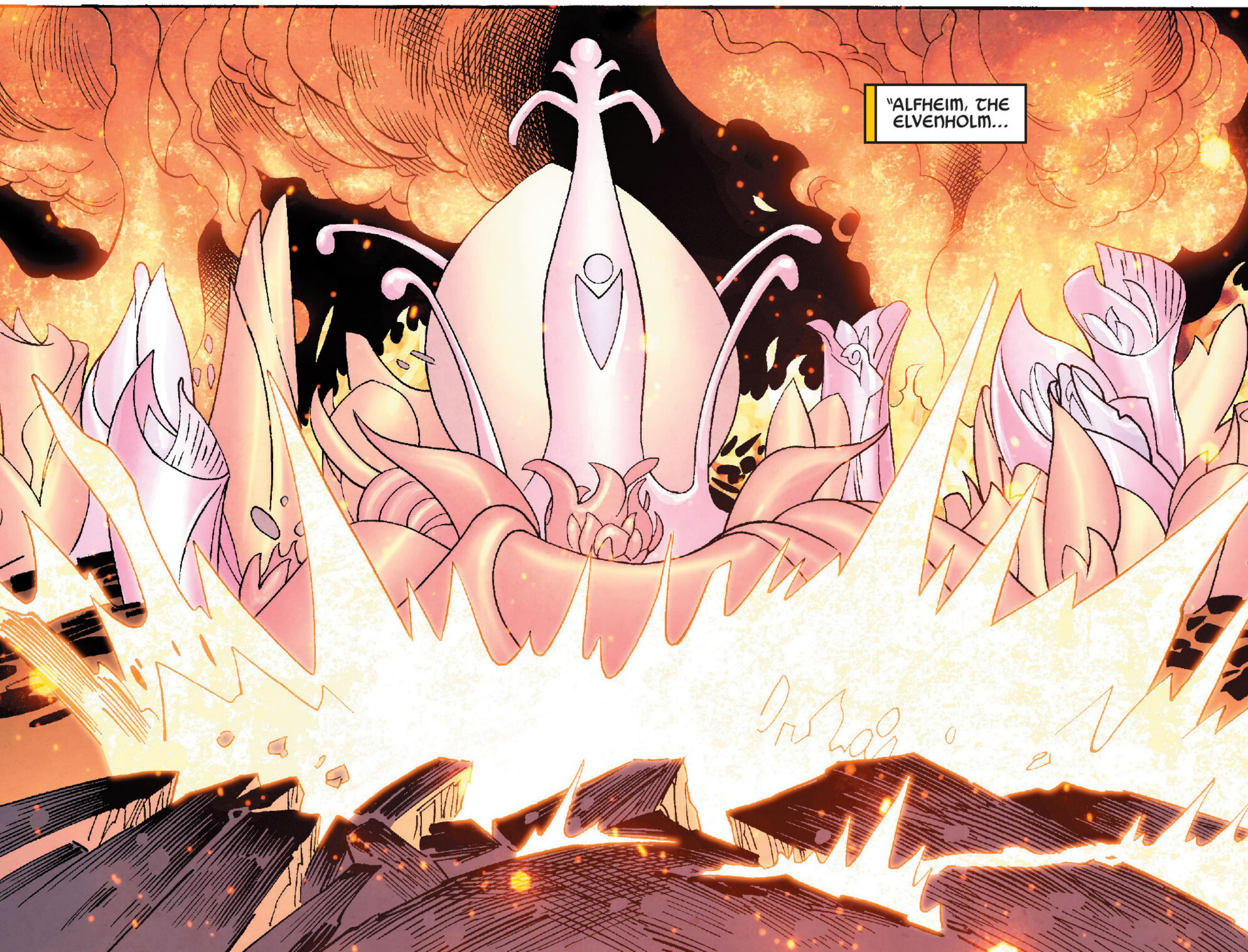
ODIN, THOR AND THE OTHER GODS ARE DEAD!
NOW DOTH THE REIGN OF LOKI BEGIN!!
I WILL BE MASTER OF ALL THOSE I SUFFER TO LIVE. AND THOSE WHO DO NOT BEND THEIR KNEE TO ME WILL DIE!
ASGARD AND THE NINE WORLDS ARE MINE!
HAHA HAHAHA HAHA HA!
HAHAHA HAHAHAHA HAHA!!!
WHA--?

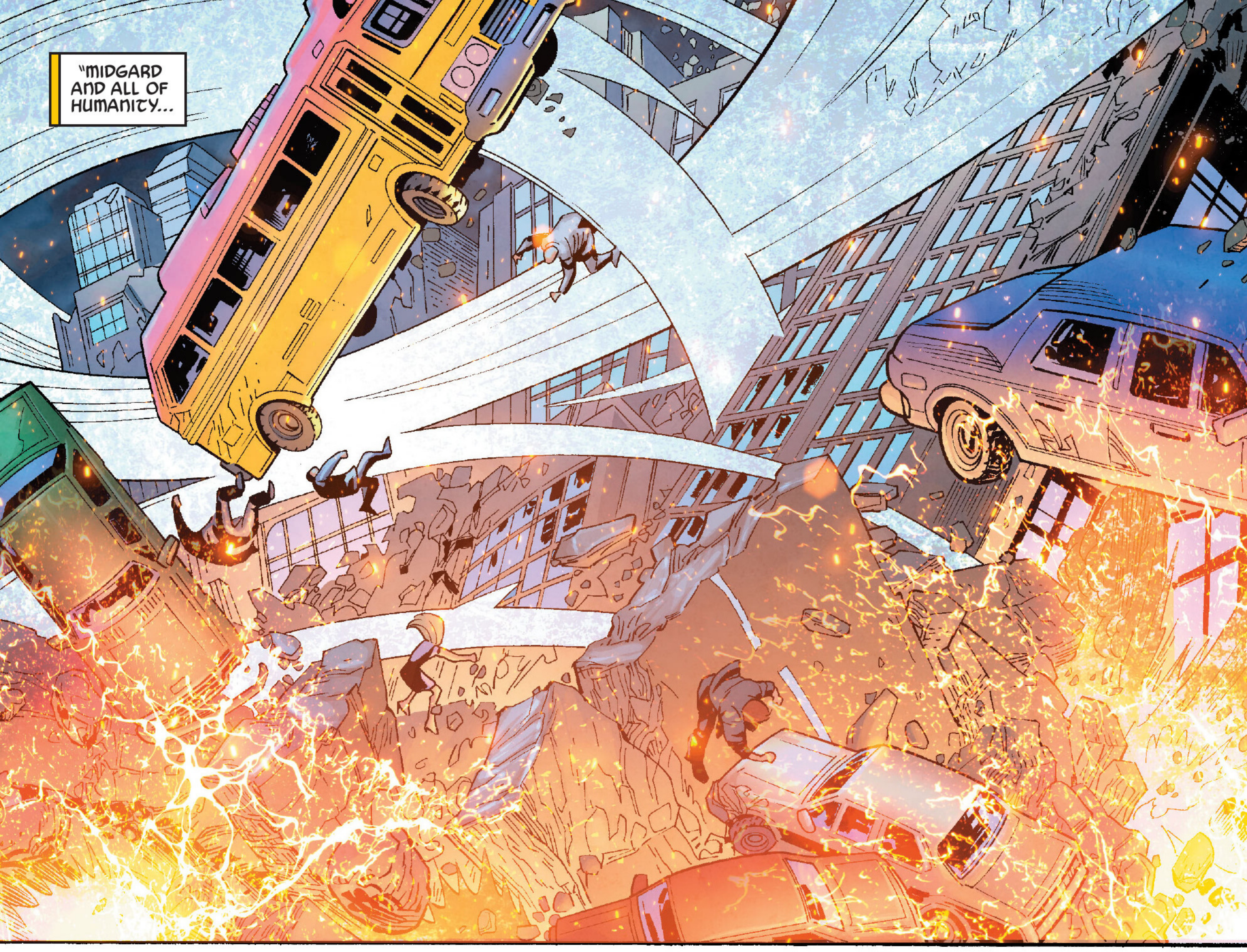
AND SHALL SURTUR BEND HIS KNEE TO YOU AS WELL, LITTLE GODLING?!
I THINK NOT.
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN SO SOON THE PROPHECIES THAT SPEAK OF THE END OF THINGS...
...OF THE BURNING GIANT OF MUSPELHEIM WHO WILL LIGHT HIS SWORD WITH THE FIRE OF THE GODS AND DESTROY EVERYTHING?
I AM THE OLDEST OF ALL, AND NONE MAY DENY MY POWER, LEAST OF ALL A HOMUNCULUS OF THE FROST GIANTS!
NOOO!!!
MJOLNIR, WIELDED BY THOR, MIGHT HAVE GIVEN ME PAUSE--BUT YOU, LITTLE MAN, ARE NO THOR.
THW ANNG

NOW SHALL THE GREAT SWORD BE LIT!
AND THE REIGN OF LOKI DRAW TO A CLOSE!
HAHA HAHAHA HAHAHA HA!!!
THE HAMMER! I MUST UNLEASH ALL OF ITS RAW POWER TO SLAY SURTUR BEFORE HE CAN DESTROY ASGARD!
NOW, MJOLNIR! RELEASE THINE ENERGY AND... AND...
I CAN'T LET GO!!
THE LIGHTNING'S TOO STRONG! IT BINDS ME TO THE HAMMER!
I'M BURNING!! BURNING!!!
ARRRRGH!
AND A MOMENT LATER, THERE IS ONLY ASH...
...IN THE FORM OF A GODLING.

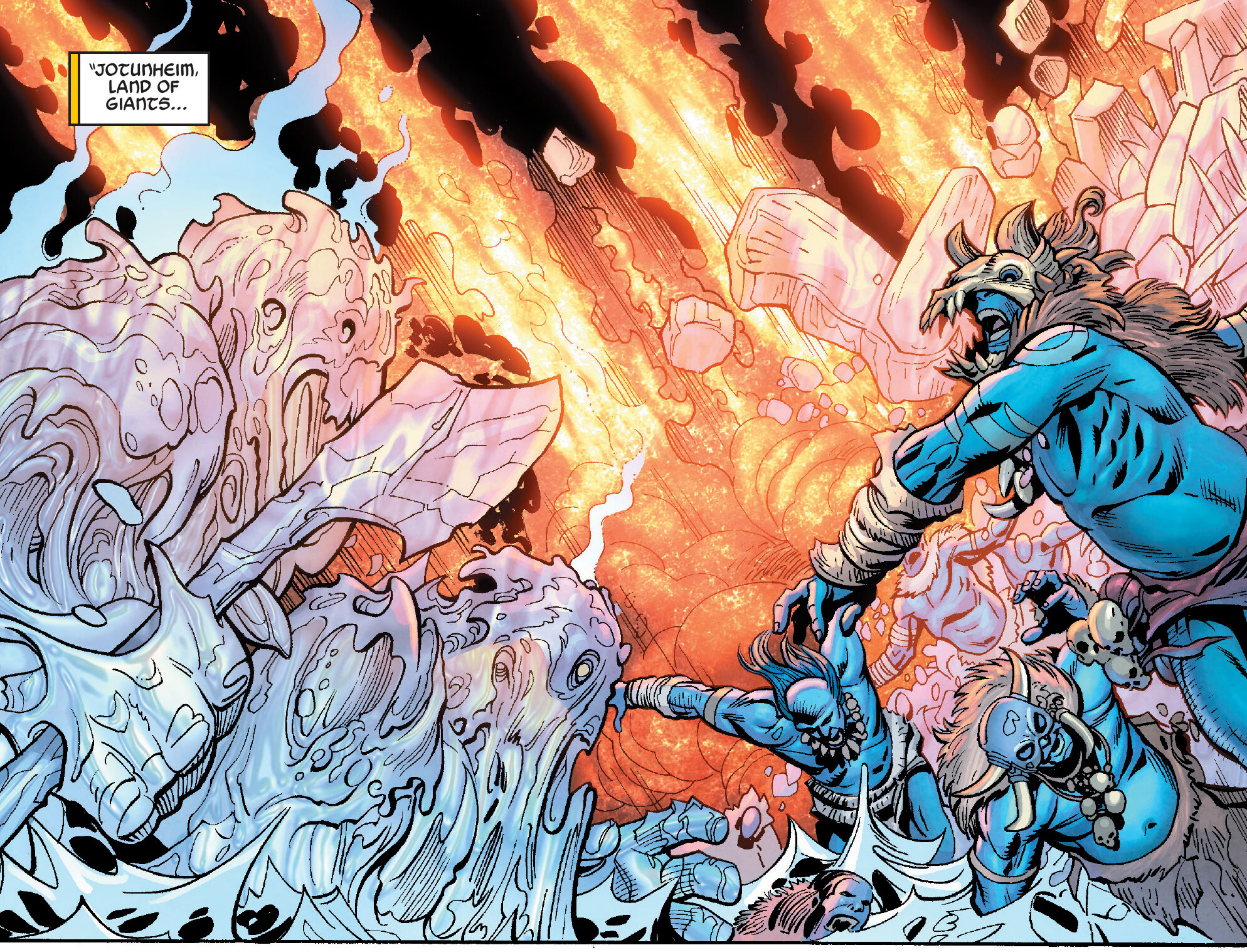
'TIS DONE! NOW SHALL I FULFILL MY *DESTINY!*
NOT SO, SURTUR. I WILL KILL YOU RATHER THAN BE CONSUMED BY THE FLAMES.
ALAS, JORMUNGAND, YOU FORGET THAT A SWORD HAS MULTIPLE USES!
SLASSSH
BEHEADING AMONG THEM.

"NOW WILL I FLING FIRE ACROSS THE NINE WORLDS...
"...AND END THIS CYCLE OF EXISTENCE!
"ASGARD WITH ITS CORPSES OF THE GODS...


"ALFHEIM, THE ELVENHOLM...


"MIDGARD AND ALL OF HUMANITY...

"HEL AND ITS DEAD...


"JOTUNHEIM, LAND OF GIANTS...

"MUSPELHEIM, REALM OF FIRE...

"NIDAVELLIR, THE DWARVEN HOME...
"...AND SVARTALFHEIM, DWELLING PLACE OF THE DARK ELVES!"

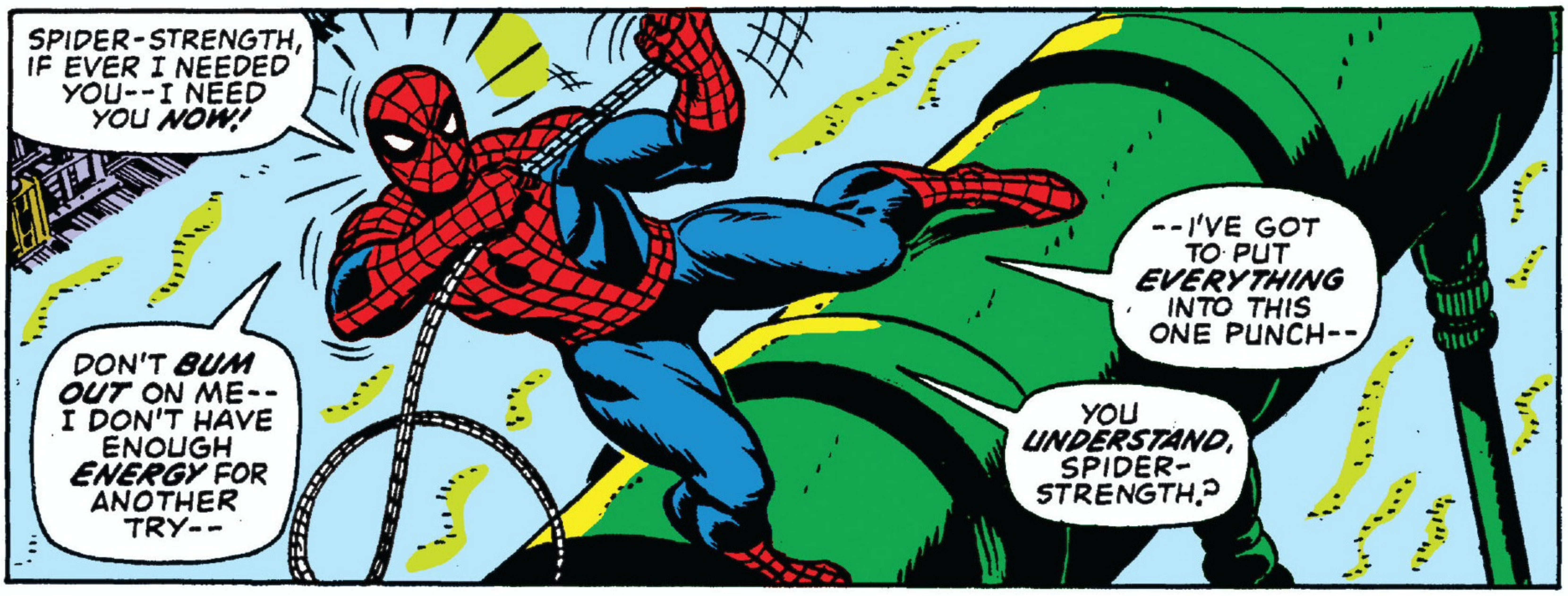
AND EVEN SURTUR HIMSELF SHALL PERISH IN HIS OWN FLAMES AS THE SUN, THE MOON AND EVEN THE STARS ARE DESTROYED, LEAVING NAUGHT BEHIND.
BUT SOMETHING THERE IS, LEFT DRIFTING IN THE GROWING VOID.

TIME IMMEMORIAL PASSES...
...UNTIL SOMEWHERE, DEEP IN THE MIDST OF THE EMPTINESS...
...THERE IS A FLASH OF LIGHTNING...
...AND THERE ARE WORDS UNSPOKEN...
...LET THERE BE LIGHT.
FIN.

WHAT IF...? DARK
SPIDER-GWEN

SPIDER-MAN! OR SHOULD I SAY--MISTER PARKER?
I HAVE YOUR WOMAN UP HERE, MY FRIEND--
I TRUST YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS?
YOU TELL ME, GOBLIN.
IT'S QUITE SIMPLE, WEB-SPINNER...
YOUR PRESENCE IN THIS WORLD HAS BEEN A SOURCE OF CONSTANT AGONY TO ME.
I WISH YOU TO LEAVE IT--PERMANENTLY.
OR ELSE... GWEN STACY DIES!
THAT CUTS IT, PUMPKIN BOY.
UP TO NOW, I'VE BEEN REAL FRIENDLY--CONSIDERING YOUR PROBLEMS, AND ALL THAT.
BUT, BUSTER--WHEN YOU START THREATENING MY GIRL--
--THE KID GLOVES ARE OFF!
A MOST CHIVALROUS ATTITUDE.
PITY YOU WON'T LIVE TO ENACT IT!
SPUNCH
YOU KNOW SOMETHING, GOBLIN?
I THINK YOU MEAN IT!

CLOSE... VERY CLOSE.
MY COLD'S MAKING ME SO DIZZY I CAN HARDLY KEEP MY BALANCE--DON'T DARE TRY ANYTHING TRICKY.
ONCE THE GOBLIN CATCHES ON TO HOW SICK I AM--I'VE HAD IT.!
SOOOO...I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CUT THIS SHORT...
...GET MY LADY LOVE OUT OF HERE...
...AND FINISH THINGS WITH GOBBIE LATER!
BRASH FOOL!
YOUR END IS NEAR--
--WHY BE SO BLIND AS NOT TO SEE IT?
NOW! I'VE GOT TO MOVE NOW!
I MAY NOT GET ANOTHER CHANCE--
--AND FOR GWENDY'S SAKE--
--I'VE GOT TO MAKE THIS ONE COUNT!


SPIDER-STRENGTH, IF EVER I NEEDED YOU--I NEED YOU NOW!
DON'T BUM OUT ON ME--I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH ENERGY FOR ANOTHER TRY--
--I'VE GOT TO PUT EVERYTHING INTO THIS ONE PUNCH--
YOU UNDERSTAND, SPIDER-STRENGTH?

EVERYTHING I HAVE!
WHA-KOW!!

HE'S DOWN--FOR A WHILE, AT LEAST.
EVEN GETTING TOGETHER WHAT STRENGTH I HAVE LEFT--
--I COULDN'T PACK MUCH OF A WALLOP.
MY BEST BET IS TO PICK UP GWEN AND RUN.
AND THERE'S THE LADY NOW--OUT LIKE A LIGHT.
GOOD THING, TOO--IF SPIDEY'S TO SAVE HIS SECRET I.D.!
BUT, AS SPIDEY HURRIES TOWARD A JUBILANT REUNION--
--THE GREEN GOBLIN PERFORMS A REUNION OF HIS OWN, AIDED BY THE REMOTE-CONTROLLED FLYER OF HIS OWN DESIGN!
GWEN!
LOOKS LIKE SHE'S IN A STATE OF SHOCK!
I'D BETTER GET HER TO A HOSPITAL--HAVE THEM GIVE HER A SEDATIVE OF SOME KIND--
YOU CURSED INTERLOPER!
YOU'LL NEVER TAKE THAT GIRL ANYWHERE!
SHE'S DOOMED, DO YOU HEAR ME?
WHAK!
DOOMED--AND SO ARE YOU!

WHAT IF...?

MANY A PERSON IS SHAPED BY THE MEMORY OF THEIR DARKEST DAY.
FOREVER ALTERED BY A MOMENT ETCHED DEEP IN THEIR VERY MARROW.
GWEN!
COME ON...
OFTEN, THEY ARE HAUNTED BY THE CHOICES THEY MADE.
THE ACTIONS THEY DID OR DIDN'T TAKE.
GOTCHA!
IF THEY COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN, TAKE A DIFFERENT PATH...
THWIP
SPIDER-POWERS, I LOVE--
...PERHAPS IT WOULD MERELY BE ANOTHER IN AN ENDLESS STRING OF CLOSE CALLS.
HAHAHAHA!
DID YOU REALLY THINK IT WOULD BE THAT EASY?!
SNNIPP
PERHAPS NOT.
GWEN--

PERHAPS SOME MOMENTS MUST ALWAYS BE PAID FOR IN BLOOD.
KRAK
SPLASH
GASP
WHERE AM I?! WHAT'S--?

SP... SPIDER-MAN?!
HEY... HEY! ARE YOU...?
OH NO...
OH GOD!
PETER, NO!
OH YES, PETER!
THE FOOL SEALED HIS OWN FATE!
I'LL LET YOU LIVE...FOR NOW.
LIVE AND REMEMBER PETER PARKER'S UTTER FAILURE.

IN HER SHOCK, GWEN HAD DONE WHAT SEEMED BEST.
PROTECTED THE MAN SHE LOVED.
THAT MONSTER... **KIDNAPPED** US. AND THEN I... I FELL...
PETER...HE JUMPED IN... SAVED ME.
NYPD
IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD, PETER PARKER DIED A HERO.
WHAT DID THE DETAILS MATTER?

HECK OF A THING, SAVING YOUR LIFE.
NEVER WOULD HAVE GUESSED PETER HAD IT IN HIM.
WHAT THE HELL WAS THE KID THINKING, PLAYING HERO LIKE THAT?!
I TELL YOU, ALL THOSE PICTURES OF SPIDER-MAN GOT IN HIS HEAD, AND--
JONAH! THIS ISN'T THE PLACE!
DID ANYONE KNOW WHO PETER REALLY WAS?
WAS HE REALLY CARRYING THAT ALL BY HIMSELF?
HOW ARE YOU HOLDING UP, GWEN?
DO YOU WANT TO GO GRAB SOME COFFEE OR SOMETHING?
THANKS, MJ. I JUST...
I THINK I NEED TO BE ALONE RIGHT NOW.

THE FORMER RESIDENCE OF ONE PETER PARKER, A.K.A. SPIDER-MAN.
GWEN SUSPECTED SHE WOULD FIND LITTLE HERE, SAVE FOR GRIEF AND GHOSTS.
BUT WHERE ELSE COULD SHE LOOK FOR ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS SHE NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO ASK?
AND SO, SHE RETURNED DAY AFTER DAY...
WHERE ARE YOU, HARRY OSBORN?
YOU HAVE TO COME HOME SOMEDAY.
DON'T YOU?
...HOPING EACH TIME THAT THERE WOULD FINALLY BE SOMEONE TO OPEN THE DOOR.

...GWEN?
HARRY.
I'M *SORRY* I...
...THAT I WASN'T...
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S--
IT JUST DOESN'T FEEL REAL.
COULD I...?
I'D LIKE TO SIT IN HIS ROOM FOR A WHILE. IF THAT'S *ALL RIGHT.*
OF COURSE, GWEN.
HOWEVER LONG YOU NEED.

SCIE FAI
CLICK
IT FEELS SO EMPTY...
COME ON. GET IT TOGETHER.
THERE WERE NO ANSWERS TO BE FOUND AMONG PETER'S THINGS.
ONLY REMNANTS OF ANOTHER LIFE THAT GWEN HAD NEVER KNOWN.
A LIFE THAT HAD BEEN STOLEN RIGHT IN FRONT OF HER.

MAYBE IT WASN'T ANSWERS SHE'D BEEN LOOKING FOR, AFTER ALL.
NO... NO...
HMM, MAYBE...

OKAY, GWEN...
...NOW WHAT?

OKAY. THIS CAN'T BE *TOO* HARD.
RIGHT?
THE MECHANISM LOOKS SIMPLE ENO--
GAH!
THWIP
OKAY. *FEELS* SECURE.

AS THE COLD WIND WHIPPED AROUND HER, ONE TRUTH RANG CRYSTAL CLEAR IN THAT MOMENT...
...GWEN STACY COULDN'T TAKE THAT STEP.
NO, NO, NO, NO, NO.
SHE POSSESSED NO POWERS. NO TRAINING.
JUST WHAT THE BOY SHE LOVED HAD LEFT BEHIND.
AND A COSTUME WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH. NOT FOR WHAT SHE WANTED.
SHE NEEDED HELP.

AND WHO BETTER TO TURN TO THAN A FRIEND WHO WAS AS HEARTSICK AS SHE WAS?
YOU WANT ME TO WHAT?!
I WANT YOU TO HELP ME STOP THE GREEN GOBLIN.
GWEN, I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT--
DON'T YOU WANT TO MAKE HIM PAY?!
YOU THINK I WOULDN'T WRING THE LIFE OUT OF THAT MONSTER WITH MY BARE HANDS IF I HAD THE CHANCE?
PETER WAS MY BEST FRIEND.
BUT WE'RE JUST TWO NORMAL COLLEGE KIDS. THIS IS WAY OUT OF OUR LEAGUE.
LEAVE IT TO THE POLICE OR SPIDER-MAN--
SPIDER-MAN IS DEAD, HARRY.

PETER WAS SPIDER-MAN.
...
HOW...?
HE... HE NEVER TOLD ME.
I DIDN'T KNOW EITHER.
NOT UNTIL--
BUT HE KNEW. THE GOBLIN.

HE KNEW WHO PETER WAS. HE KNEW HE COULD USE ME TO HURT PETER.
AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HE DID.
YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF FOR WHAT HAPPENED, GWEN.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
NO. IT'S HIS. AND I NEED TO MAKE HIM PAY.
WILL YOU HELP ME?
...WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN MIND?

AND SO, A PLAN BEGAN TO FORM. BUILT OFF THE GENIUS OF THEIR LOST FRIEND.
I *THINK* THIS WILL WORK.
IF YOU SAY SO...
FORGED IN THEIR SHARED SORROW AND RAGE.
HERE?
TOO MUCH FOOT TRAFFIC, EVEN AT NIGHT.
THE THEATER DEPARTMENT WAS ABOUT TO THROW THIS STUFF OUT. THEY WON'T MISS IT.
THANKS, MJ. YOU'RE A *LIFESAVER.*
YOU KNOW, IF YOU'RE UP FOR A COSTUME PARTY, I HOPE YOU'LL BE UP FOR THAT COFFEE DATE SOON.
I'VE BEEN *WORRIED* ABOUT YOU, GWEN.
I KNOW. SOON. I *PROMISE.*
CAREFULLY...
AND THAT SHOULD JUST ABOUT DO IT.

BUT THERE WAS ONE ASPECT OF THE PLAN THAT GWEN DIDN'T SHARE WITH HARRY.
THE TINIEST OF DETAILS THAT SHE FEARED HER RELUCTANT ALLY WOULD NEVER AGREE TO.
THE GUN HAD ONCE BEEN THE SERVICE WEAPON OF CAPTAIN GEORGE STACY.
PERHAPS IT COULD SOMEHOW ADD A VENEER OF JUSTICE TO THE UGLY TASK BEFORE HER.

BUT HOW TO LURE THE MONSTER INTO THE TRAP THEY HAD BUILT?
GWEN WAS CONVINCED THE GOBLIN WOULD BE DRAWN BACK TO THE SCENE OF HIS BRUTAL VICTORY.
WHAT?!
THAT HE WOULD WANT TO CELEBRATE. TO GLOAT.
WEBBING...?
BAH!
STILL ALIVE!
I'LL BE WAITING AT 910 WEST 52 nd STREET
AND IF GWEN COULD RIP THAT VICTORY OUT OF HIS HANDS...
...SHE COULD STEER HIM IN WHATEVER DIRECTION SHE WANTED.

I CAN SEE THE GLIDER. HE'S INCOMING.
GET READY.

YOU IMPERTINENT LITTLE *BUG!*

THIS TIME, I'LL MAKE *SURE* YOU'RE DEAD!

ALMOST THERE!
GET READY...
WHERE ARE YOU, YOU LITTLE--?
BEEP
FWOOM
FWOOM
WHA--?!
FWOOM
FWOOM

NO!
STAY HIDDEN.
YOU DON'T HAVE A MASK.
IT'S AMAZING STUFF, ISN'T IT?
PETER WAS A GENIUS.
AND NOW HE'S DEAD.
BECAUSE OF YOU.

NNNNGH! NOT BAD...FOR AN IMPOSTOR.
SO, WHAT'S THE PLAN NOW THAT YOU'VE CAUGHT ME?
ARREST ME? JUSTICE FOR THE POOR SQUASHED SPIDER?
YOU KNOW I'LL TELL EVERYONE WHO HE REALLY WAS.
THIS WAS THE MOMENT SHE HAD BEEN WORKING FOR, BEEN WAITING FOR.
SHE HAD TOLD HERSELF HOW EASY IT WOULD BE. JUST A SLIGHT MOVEMENT OF THE FINGER.
OH, REALLY? YOU THINK YOU HAVE IT IN YOU TO ACTUALLY STOP ME?
THAT YOU CAN DO WHAT THE REAL SPIDER-MAN FAILED TO?
ALL SHE HAD TO DO WAS REMEMBER THAT MOMENT WITH PETER IN THE WATER.

AND SO, SHE REMEMBERED PETER.
BRILLIANT AND SILLY.
BRIMMING WITH LIFE AND PURPOSE AND POTENTIAL.
SO MUCH MORE THAN SHE EVER KNEW.

HAHAHAH!
I KNEW YOU WERE TOO WEAK TO PULL THE TRIGGER.
NO.
THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.
YOU?!
PETER WASN'T WEAK. HE WAS A HERO. HE DIDN'T END YOU BECAUSE THAT'S NOT WHO HE WAS.
AND I'M NOT GOING TO BETRAY THAT.
SUCH SENTIMENTAL DRIVEL.
I SHOULD HAVE KILLED YOU WH--
BANG
HOW--?

NO...
I'M NOT WEAK.
AND I'M NO HERO.
HA... HARRY...
S... SON...
IT... IT CAN'T BE...

FATHER... YOU'RE--
HARRY... I DIDN'T...
...I DIDN'T KNOW...
YOU DID THIS.
YOU MADE ME DO THIS.
NO. I NEVER WANTED YOU TO--

YOU MURDERER!
I'LL MAKE YOU PAY!
MAYBE IT WAS HER FAULT. SHE HAD DRAGGED HARRY INTO HER SCHEME.
SHE WAS THE REASON HE WAS THERE.
AND SO, SHE DID THE ONLY THING SHE COULD THINK OF.
KNOWING THAT SHE COULD NEVER OUTRUN THE SOUND OF THAT GUNSHOT...
...OR THE HATE IN HER FRIEND'S EYES.

MANY A PERSON TRIES TO BLOT OUT THE MEMORY OF THEIR DARKEST DAY.
THEY CAN DROWN THE EVIDENCE.
SLIP BACK INTO THE STAID RHYTHM OF NORMAL LIFE.
BUT THE DARKNESS IS NOT SO EASILY BANISHED.

PETER PARKER
BELOVED NEPHEW
AND FRIEND
I'M SURE YOU'D MAKE SOME STUPID JOKE ABOUT HOW I'M SHOWING YOU UP WITH THESE FLOWERS.
I NEVER THOUGHT I COULD MISS YOUR JOKES SO MUCH.
OH, PETER. I JUST...
I'M GLAD YOU CAN'T SEE THE MESS I'VE MADE OF THINGS.
BUT I'LL FIND A WAY TO MAKE THIS RIGHT.
I SWEAR IT.
WHEN A HERO DIES, IT LEAVES A VACUUM.
AND NATURE DOES WHAT NATURE DOES.

MAYBE GWEN STACY DIDN'T HAVE POWERS. WAS STILL UNTESTED.
BUT SHE HAD MADE A PROMISE.
SHE'D HELPED MAKE A MONSTER.
HAHAHAHA!
OH, HARRY...
AND SHE WAS DONE HIDING FROM BOTH.
MAYBE SHE WASN'T READY TO CALL HERSELF A HERO JUST YET...
...BUT SHE WAS FINALLY STEPPING OUT OF THE SHADOWS OF HER DARKEST DAY.
END.

WHAT IF...? DARK

VENOM

The war.
The suit.
The scientist.
The **cage...**

THE BAXTER BUILDING.
...and the Thing.
REED?
YA IN HERE? WE WAS SUPPOSED TO MEET OUT AT THE CRASH SITE.
WORLD'S SMARTEST GUY AND YET HE'D FORGET ABOUT A DAY LIKE TODAY...
WHAK
WHAT--?
WHAK
IS THAT THING...
...ALIVE?
BASED PURELY ON OUR KNOWN DEFINITION OF LIFE AS THE CAPACITY FOR METABOLISM, GROWTH, REPRODUCTION AND FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITY...

...I'D SAY IT'S SURELY ALIVE... BUT SENTIENT IS ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY.
IT'S FASCINATING, REALLY. AN ORGANIC, SYMBIOTIC BEING THAT RETURNED TO EARTH ATTACHED TO OUR WEB-SLINGING COLLEAGUE IN THE FORM OF A COSTUME.
AFTER DETACHING THE SYMBIOTE FROM SPIDER-MAN, WE'VE KEPT IT HERE FOR FURTHER STUDY AND EVALUATION.
OF COURSE, IT HAS GARNERED PLENTY OF INTEREST... WE'VE HAD MORE THAN A FEW BREAK-IN ATTEMPTS.
ALL UNSUCCESSFUL THANKS TO OUR NEW SECURITY PROTO--
YOU FORGOT OUR ANNIVERSARY, REED.
I DIDN'T FORGET, BEN.
YOU'VE JUST RETURNED FROM MONTHS IN SPACE AND, CONSIDERING WHAT THIS DATE MEANS FOR YOU... I FIGURED IT WAS BEST TO ALLOW YOU TO PROCESS THINGS ON YOUR OWN.
TELL THE TRUTH. YER AFRAID OF FEELIN' GUILTY FOR WHAT YA DID...
...FOR TURNIN' ME INTO A MONSTER.
MAYBE YA SHOULDA PUT ME IN A GLASS JAR TOO, MR. FANTASTIC.
YOU KNOW THAT I DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO FIND A CURE FOR YOU, BEN, AND I WON'T EVER STOP UNTIL I DO.
YOU'RE MY FAMILY, AND I'D DO ANYTHING--

REED, DARLING, THE REPORTER IS HERE WAITING FOR YOU. YOU SAID YOU'D BE BACK IN JUST A MINUTE.
SORRY ABOUT THAT, SUE. I'M ON MY WAY NOW.
WE'LL CONTINUE THIS LATER, BEN.
YOU SHOULD COME BY FOR DINNER...I HEAR SHE-HULK IS TRYING HER HAND AT LASAGNA.
YEAH...SURE. I'LL CHECK MY SCHEDULE.
CAN YA BELIEVE THAT GUY?
HE'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND...
...THE STRANGE LOOKS AND THE GASPS... PEOPLE WHISPERIN' ABOUT YA LIKE YA CAN'T HEAR. CALLIN' YA NAMES AND HIDIN' THEIR KIDS--
WHAK
HEY, WHAT'RE YA TRYIN' TA--?

I'M SORRY, BUT I CAN'T... I CAN'T LET YA OUT.
Weak man.
YOU CAN... HELP?
Strong body.
I HELP YOU...
DEET
...YOU HELP ME.
Perfect host.
A host more suited to the symbiote's proclivities than the web-slinger.
BEN, ARE YOU STILL IN HERE? I HEARD A LOUD--

A host so broken by his **desire** to be human...
WHAT DID YOU DO?
...that he would bargain with the remnants of his humanity.
Strong body.

Weak man.
IT... CALLED TO ME.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, BEN. THAT BEING INFECTED SPIDER-MAN.
IT MAY HAVE ENHANCED SOME OF HIS ABILITIES, BUT IT ALSO ENHANCED HIS EMOTIONAL RESPONSES... IT LATCHED ON TO HIS CONSCIENCE.
I UNDERSTAND.
IT WANTS TO HELP.
IT PROMISED TO HELP.
I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU WANT THIS, BEN... BUT THIS ISN'T THE WAY.

THAT THING IS DANGEROUS.
I'M SORRY.
NO...
BEN...
KSSSH
...WE WILL FIND ANOTHER WAY. I PROMISE.
I DID FIND A WAY...AND NOW YOU WANNA STOP ME BECAUSE YOUR OWN EGO CAN'T STAND THAT YOU'RE NOT THE ONE WHO FIGURED IT OUT.
BEN... THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL. LISTEN TO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

...THIS ISN'T THE REAL YOU.
FRAAAAK
THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE DEAD WRONG, PAL.
THIS IS THE MOST ME I'VE BEEN SINCE THAT DAMNED ACCIDENT.
JUST DO ME ONE FAVOR, REED...
...STAY THE HELL OUTTA MY WAY.

SSSSOMETHING HASSS CHANGED...
...I CAN SSSSMELL IT.
SPSSH
IT ISSSS FREE.
"THERE HAS TO BE A WAY..."

...IF THAT SYMBIOTE IS CAPABLE OF KEEPING THE INTEGRITY OF HIS MOLECULES...
REED...
...THEN IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO REMOVE THE SUIT WITHOUT DESTABILIZING THEM AGAIN. IF I COULD JUST--
REED, YOU CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO KEEP BEN HUMAN AFTER YOU SEPARATE THEM. BUT THE LONGER THAT THING STAYS ON HIM...
...WE DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S CAPABLE OF.
IT TAPS INTO ITS HOST'S SUBCONSCIOUS... THEIR DEEPEST DESIRES.
IF I TAKE AWAY THE SUIT, I TAKE AWAY THE THING THAT'S GOTTEN BEN THE CLOSEST HE'S EVER BEEN TO HAVING HIS DESIRE TO LOOK HUMAN BE FULFILLED SINCE THE ACCIDENT.
WITH THAT SUIT, BEN IS A THREAT TO HIMSELF AND OTHERS. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DEAL WITH THAT, EVEN IF BEN DOESN'T LIKE IT.
IT IS NOT OUR RESPONSIBILITY, SUE.
IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO BE A MONSTER...

"...SO BEN DOESN'T LOSE HIS HUMANITY."
HIYA.
HAVE A NICE DAY, LADIES.
LOOKIN' GOOD, GRIMM...LOOKIN' GOOD.
WHAT'RE YA DOIN'?
WAIT... I CAN SENSE IT...
...SOMETHING'S WRONG.

WHATEVER'S BACK HERE...
FWSSSH
...YOU'RE GONNA BE REAL SORRY.
THE ONLY THING I'M SSSORRY ABOUT...
...ISSS HOW THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE TREATED YOU.
LIZARD. I DON'T SEE THE WEB-HEAD AROUND... SO I GUESS I GET TO DO THE PUNCHIN'.

I'M NOT HERE TO FIGHT.
TOO BAD, 'CUS...
...IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!
KRAAK
THE THING. DEHUMANIZED. MONSTROUS.
UNLOVED.
EVEN BY THE MAN WHO CREATED YOU. MY LIZARD COMPANIONSSSS HAVE TOLD ME MUCH, BEN. THEY LISSSSTEN... THEY KNOW YOUR SSSSTRUGGLE.
I SAID IT AIN'T TALKIN' TIME. IT'S CLOBB--
THE FANTASSSSTIC FOUR LIED TO YOU.
WHAM
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT, CREEP.

THEY TELL YOU THAT YOU'RE SSSSTILL ONE OF THEM.
BUT THEY ONLY SSSSAY THAT BECAUSE THEY'RE AFRAID.
YOU DON'T KNOW--
I DON'T KNOW? LOOK AT ME.
PEOPLE FEAR ME WITH ONE LOOK. SSSSCALES, TAIL, TEETH... I WILL NEVER BE ACCEPTED. EVEN WHEN I TRY TO DO GOOD...
...FEAR DRIVES PEOPLE TO HATE.
SSSSOUND FAMILIAR?
YOU'VE HURT PEOPLE. AS BOTH DR. CONNORS AND THE LIZARD.
I AIN'T LIKE YOU.
WITHOUT THE FANTASSSTIC FOUR AT YOUR SSSSIDE... DO YOU THINK YOU'D SSSSTILL BE SSSSEEN ASSSS A HERO?

ALL I WANTED WAS TO FIND A WAY TO HELP OTHERSSSS...TO REGENERATE LIMBSSSS.
I USSSSED MYSELF AS MY OWN TESSST SSSSUBJECT, AND I SSSSUCCEEDED...
...BUT NO ONE ELSSSSE SEES THIS AS A SUCCESSSS.
AND YET...I'VE NEVER SSSSTOPPED TRYING TO HELP, EVEN WHEN THE FANTASSSSTIC FOUR MISSSSUNDERSTAND MY INTENTIONS... EVEN WHEN THE WORLD HATES ME.
YOU ALSSSO WANT TO HELP.
AND THAT SUIT...THE ONE THAT HAS CURED YOUR CURSE...THAT COULD HELP THOUSSSSANDS OF PEOPLE.
YA THINK...?
I KNEW THERE WAS SSSSOMETHING SSSSPECIAL ABOUT SSSSPIDER-MAN'S SSSSUIT WHEN WE LEFT BATTLEWORLD... I JUST DIDN'T KNOW HOW SSSSPECIAL.
SSSSHARING YOUR CURE IS WHAT A HERO WOULD DO.
AND I CAN HELP YOU DO IT...

"...I CAN HELP YOU **SHARE** THISSSS GIFT."
YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, DOC? YOU'VE **TESTED** IT...?
REED ALWAYS SAID ANY GOOD EXPERIMENT MUST BE TESTED AT LEAST--
LISSSSTENING TO **REED RICHARDSSSS** HASSSS ONLY CAUSED PROBLEMS.
LISSSSTENING TO **REED RICHARDSSSS** TURNED YOU INTO A MONSSSSTER.
I JUST WANNA MAKE SURE THIS WORKS, OKAY?
IT WILL.
I PROMISSSSE.
DEET

HUH?
FWOOOSH
ARGH!
DOC... TURN IT... OFF!
NO!
DOC, YOU SAID--
I SAID I WOULD HELP YOU SSSSHARE YOUR GIFT.
I'D SSSSAY I'VE SSSSUCCEEDED.
WHUMP
YOU LYIN' PIECE 'A--

WHUMP
I DIDN'T LIE, BEN...
...I TOLD YOU THAT PEOPLE FEAR USSS BECAUSE THEY FEAR WHAT THEY CAN'T UNDERSTAND.
THAT FEAR BECOMESSSS HATE.
NO.
BUT NOW...
...I WILL GIVE THEM A REASSSON TO HATE...

"...BEGINNING WITH MR. FANTASTIC."
YOU KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THE ONE TO DO THIS, REED.
OR, AT LEAST, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE.
WE CAN CALL IN JOHNNY AND SHE-HULK...YOU KNOW THEY'D HELP, AND THEIR MISSION IS FAR LESS PRESSING THAN--
IT HAS TO BE ME.

AND WE'RE DONE DISCUSSING IT.
NO, WE'RE NOT. WE'RE A FAMILY. JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE EMOTIONAL ABOUT BEN DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO FACE HIM ALONE.
HIS ABILITIES ARE DIFFERENT NOW.
I SAID WE'RE DONE DISCUSSING--
AROOOOO
A BREACH?
COMPUTER, PROVIDE VISUALS FOR--
THOOM

HELLO, REED RICHARDSSSSSS.

DR. CONNORS? WHAT HAPPENED TO BEN? IS HE--?
THOOM
REED!
SUE... TELL ME YOU'RE OKAY--
ARE YOU READY TO SSSSEEE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THIS SSSSUIT, REED RICHARDSSSS?

...HRGN...
HRGN!
COME... ON...
GET AWAY FROM HIM!
COME ON!
WHUMP
UNGH!
KRAAAK
...UNGH...

HRSSSSS!
YOU THOUGHT I WASSSS NOTHING MORE THAN A CREATURE. YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE THE SSSSMARTEST MAN AROUND WHEN WE WERE SSSSTUCK ON BATTLEWORD...
YOU DON'T SSSSSEEM SO SSSSSMART--
NO...
CHOMP
-KAFF-... H-HOW...?
I WILL ENJOY THISSSS.
DR. CONNORS...

...FACE ME INSTEAD!
YOU'RE TOO LATE.
SNAP
NO!
NO, NO, NO...
WHUMP
...REED... DON'T BE GONE...

...I NEED YA.
I'M SO SORRY.
THIS IS MY FAULT...I DIDN'T LISTEN... I SHOULDA LISTENED...
YOU DID WHAT WAS BESSSST...
...REED WAS SSSSELFISH. HE WANTED THE SUIT FOR HIMSELF, AND HE WANTED TO KEEP YOU FROM USSSSING IT.
WE ARE BETTER WITHOUT HIM, BEN.
WE?
THERE AIN'T NO WE.
THERE AIN'T NO FANTASTIC FOUR.
IT'S JUST ME!

KRSSSH
We make monsters.
And watch as they hold up a mirror.
Greed.
Anger.
Hatred.
Insecurity.
Doubt.
Our monsters **grow** as we feed them.

THOOM
But the broken don't **fear** monsters...
...they become **consumed** by them.
--HRN--
Broken.
Consumed.
WHAT... KOFF... WOULD REED RICHARDSSSS SSSSAY?
I DUNNO. HE AIN'T HERE.
Perfect host.
KRAK
Not more monster than man...

POLICE
POLICE
...as man **is** monster.

WHAT IF...? DARK
MOON KNIGHT

THE NATION OF BURUNDA.
I AM KHONSHU.
EVERY DECISION HAS INFINITE OUTCOMES...
...AND NOT ALL OUTCOMES ARE POSITIVE.
...MOON KNIGHT.
THIS SWORD IS THE TRADITIONAL WEAPON OF MY PEOPLE.
THANKS FOR THE HISTORY LESSON, BUSHMAN, BUT I'M HERE FOR MARLENE.
DEFEAT ME, AND THE WOMAN IS YOURS.
THWACK

YOU LOST ONE OF YOUR TRUNCHEONS, MARC...THAT DOES NOT SEEM FAIR.
NEITHER DOES THE BATTALION YOU'VE GOT AT THE READY...
...BUT I THINK I CAN MANAGE.
KA-CHAK
MY MEN HAVE ORDERS TO STAND DOWN, SPECTOR.
THIS IS JUST BETWEEN US.
GNNF!
GAH!
SLISH
FIRST BLOOD... IT ALWAYS TASTES BEST.
DOESN'T MATTER WHO GETS THE FIRST CUT...
...BUT WHO'S LEFT STANDING.
WHAK
UGH...

FWP
FWP
FWP
TNK
TNK
ARGH!
SQUELCH
WANT ME TO GIVE YOU A SEC TO GET YOUR BEARINGS?
IT ONLY SEEMS FAIR.
THIS IS *NO GAME,* SPECTOR.

GRAH!
SLICE
CLOSE! BUT YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANOTHER CHANCE.
I DO NOT NEED YOUR PITY!
THEN HOW ABOUT A FEW CRACKED RIBS?
KRAK
AND A BROKEN NOSE!
CHOK
THUD

NOW WHERE'S MARLENE?!
MARLENE'S RIGHT HERE, LOVER!
KILL THEM ALL!
BRADDA BRADDA BRADDA
GWRK!

BRADDA BRADDA BRADDA BRADDA BRADDA BRADDA BRADDA BRADDA
NOT GONNA HAPPEN, BUDDY.
I'VE GOT HIM, MARC. GET DOWN.
ACK!
MARLENE!
HUK.

"IN ONE WORLD, MARC SPECTOR--MY AVATAR--DEFEATED RAUL BUSHMAN...
"...AND HE AND MARLENE ALRAUNE LEFT BURUNDA WITH THE HELP OF JEAN-PAUL DUCHAMP.
"BUT IN THIS WORLD, THE CONFLICT CAME TO A VERY DIFFERENT CONCLUSION."
NO!

WIPWIP
WIPWIPWIP
MARC!
THOK
C'MON!
IT'S OKAY--GNNF-- MARC...
BRADDA BRADDA
BRADDA BRADDA
OH GOD.
YOU'RE... YOU'RE GONNA BE FINE, MARC.
LOST... LOTTA BLOOD...

NO, YOU'RE →SNIFF← GONNA BE OKAY. YOU'LL--
IT'S... OVER, KID.
DON'T YOU SAY THAT.
FRENCHIE... TAKE CARE 'A HER...Y'HEAR ME?
OUI, MARC. JE PROMETS.
MARLENE...
...YOU'LL BE →SNIFF← JUST FINE.
MARC?
NO!

LATER.
NONE OF US SHOULD BE JUDGED BY OUR WORST MISTAKES...
...ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO SEEK CONTRITION.
YES, MARC SPECTOR DID AWFUL THINGS...BUT HE WAS HAUNTED BY A CONSCIENCE THAT TURNED HIS LIFE AROUND.
MARC WASN'T JUST A MAN...HE WAS A HERO.
MARC SPECTOR
MANY OF YOU HERE--YOU'RE HEROES.
AND MARC WAS LUCKY TO BE AMONG YOUR RANKS.
THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE FOR HIM.
GOODBYE, MARC.
MAY YOUR MEMORY BE FOR A BLESSING.

LATER.
I WAS DELUDED IN THINKING THIS WOULD LAST FOREVER...
...THAT MARC WAS SOMEHOW IMMUNE TO DEATH...
...WITH OR WITHOUT YOU, KHONSHU.
I WON'T MAKE THAT MISTAKE AGAIN--NOT THAT IT MATTERS...
...BECAUSE NOW I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE.
PTOO
YOU BASTARD!
YOU COULD HAVE SAVED HIM!
KRCK
HE GAVE UP EVERYTHING FOR YOU!
AND YOU PUNISH HIM LIKE THIS?!
CRMMBLE
YOU DON'T DESERVE TO BE A GOD!
KERASH

>SOB<
WHY...?
WHY, MARC...?
YOU ARE HURTING, MY CHILD.
WHO SAID THAT?
THAT GLOW-- IT FEELS LIKE...THE SUN ON A SUMMER DAY...
YOU HAVE DESCENDED INTO DARKNESS...
IT'S... COMFORTING...
...COME AND BATHE IN THE GLORY OF MY LIGHT.
WHO... WHO ARE YOU?
I AM RA...
...AND I PROVIDE LIGHT TO THOSE WHO CANNOT SEE THEIR WAY.
BUT WHY WOULD YOU HELP ME?
I SEE A GREAT LIGHT IN YOU, MARLENE ALRAUNE.
IT IS A LIGHT THAT CAN BRING OTHERS OUT OF THEIR DARKNESS.
WOULD YOU PLEDGE YOURSELF TO HELPING OTHERS...
...TO ME?
...
YES.
THEN FROM NOW ON, YOU SHALL BE...

...MY LUMINARY.
RELEASE YOURSELF FROM THE DARKNESS...
...SO THAT YOU MAY BRING MY LIGHT TO OTHERS.
I WILL BRING THEM FROM THE SHADOWS, RA.
I PROMISE.

MARLENE ALRAUNE DID BRING LIGHT TO THOSE IN THE SHADOWS.
"SHE BROUGHT HOPE TO THOSE IN NEED...
"...AND IN DOING SO, SHE FOUND SOLACE IN THE GRIPS OF A GOD...
"...NOT I, OF COURSE.
GREAT JOB, LUMINARY.
"BUT GRIEF ALWAYS NEEDS AN OUTLET.
THANK YOU, DETECTIVE FLINT.
"AND THE SAME LIGHT THAT ENRICHES SOME...

"...CAN ALSO BURN HOT."
GIMME YOUR--
YOU LIKE PREYING ON OTHERS FROM THE SHADOWS?
LET'S SEE HOW WELL YOU DO IN THE LIGHT.
I CAN'T SEE!
ME NEITHER!
FEEL THE TOUCH OF RA!
AARGH!
LET HIS LIGHT BURN INTO YOU.
WHUD
THWUMP
KRAK
ARE YOU DONE, MON AMIE?
SPENCE SAYS YOU HAVE TO BE BACK IN TIME FOR THE ART AUCTION.
I'M ➔PANT⬅ DONE, FRENCHIE.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BRING PEOPLE OUT OF THE DARKNESS, EH?
YOU GIVE MARC THIS MUCH OF A HASSLE?

LATER.
I TAKE IT EVERYTHING IS ALL SET FOR THE AUCTION, SPENCE?
OF COURSE.
I SHOULD REALLY DO A LAP AROUND THE PARTY... SEE IF I CAN SUSS OUT THE SERIOUS BUYERS.
THANK YOU.
HE'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
IT'S MY DUTY.
YOU WORRY ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE.
I'M NOT YOUR MISSION, JEAN-PAUL.
I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN--
I NEVER MUCH ENJOYED THESE PARTIES--EVEN WHEN MARC THREW THEM. YOU?
THEY'RE JUST ANOTHER REMINDER THAT HE'S GONE.
MISS MARLENE, THERE'S A GENTLEMAN WHO WISHES TO SPEAK WITH YOU IN PRIVATE.
HE CLAIMS TO BE A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE BURUNDAN EMBASSY.
TAKE ME TO HIM, SAMUELS.
YOU WANT THAT I SHOULD COME WITH YOU?
WE KNOW IT'S NOT BUSHMAN. HE'S TOO CRAVEN TO COME OUT OF HIDING FOR THIS.
WELL, HELL HATH NO FURY AN' ALL THAT...

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, LIEUTENANT?
YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
I REMEMBER YOU FROM WHEN YOUR GENERAL BUSHMAN TOOK ME CAPTIVE.*
WELL, THEN WE CAN DISPATCH WITH PLEASANTRIES, CAN'T WE, MS. ALRAUNE?
*SEE MARC SPECTOR: MOON KNIGHT #1. --MARTIN
IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE, YOU WILL STOP BUYING ARTIFACTS FROM MY COUNTRY.
YOU COLONIZERS BELIEVE YOU CAN JUST DO WHAT YOU WILL, BUT OUR GENERAL BUSHMAN DOES NOT TAKE KINDLY TO--
HE'S A COWARD. HE GOES FROM EMBASSY TO EMBASSY, BUT ONLY IN COUNTRIES WITH NO EXTRADITION.
I'LL DO WHAT I HAVE TO BECAUSE HE DOESN'T HAVE THE GUTS TO FACE ME FOR WHAT HE'S DONE.
RAUL BUSHMAN TOOK MY FATHER FROM ME--HE TOOK MARC FROM ME.
THERE'S NO THREAT YOU CAN DOLE OUT THAT'S GONNA SCARE ME.
TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF--
YOU ONLY THINK YOU ARE NOT AFRAID...
...BUT WE HAVE MANY CREATIVE WAYS OF INSTILLING FEAR.

FWIP
THUD
CHOKE
FWUMP
HOW WAS THAT FOR CREATIVE?
THIS HAS TO END.
PLEASE... HELP ME, RA.
SO SHALL IT BE, MY LUMINARY.

THE BURUNDAN EMBASSY, CAMBODIA.
GAH!
OOF!
WHAM
FRENCHIE, I'M IN.

--BEEN A NEW SUPER HERO IN NEW YORK...
GENERAL...
...THERE'S A PROBLEM.
WHAT IS IT?
WE MAY HAVE A BREACH.
LOCK DOWN--
CHUK
AKH!
I WONDERED WHEN YOU WOULD COME.

HEH...DID YOU MAKE THAT LITTLE OUTFIT YOURSELF?
NO MATTER... YOU WILL NOT SUCCEED.
DON'T BE SO SURE.
FIRST, YOU PILFER OUR CULTURE, THEN YOU COME HERE TO TRY TO ASSASSINATE ME?
YOUR RELENTLESS BATTLE AGAINST MY COUNTRY KNOWS NO BOUNDS, WOMAN.
I HAVE NO ISSUE WITH YOUR COUNTRY--JUST YOU.
AND IT'S TIME I FIXED THAT PROBLEM...
...FOR GOOD.

I ONCE STOPPED MARC FROM KILLING YOU.*
*SEE MOON KNIGHT #1 (1980). --MARTIN
MY THANKS WAS ALLOWING YOU TO LIVE SO LONG.
SKRIPP
DO YOU REMEMBER THIS?
THIS IS THE KNIFE YOUR FATHER USED TO TRY TO SCARE ME...THE NIGHT I KILLED HIM.
"I SHOULD HAVE MELTED IT DOWN WITH THE REST OF THE GOLD YOU FOUND IN THAT TOMB...
"...BUT I WANTED TO SEE THE LOOK ON YOUR FACE..."
...WHEN I KILL YOU WITH IT!

YOU WON'T GET THE CHANCE!
WHAM
GAH!
WHERE ARE YOU, WOMAN?
HEHEHE... I GOT YOU...
GNNF!
DID YOU THINK I WOULD GO EASY ON YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE A WOMAN?
UGH...

POK
I WILL SEND YOU TO YOUR FATHER.
I WILL SEND YOU TO SPECTOR.
CHOKE
STAY STRONG, MY LUMINARY.
USE THE LIGHT WITHIN YOU.
YOU KOFF FIRST...
AHHH!
SHUNT
UHHHH...

THIS IS FOR YOU, MARC.
SLK
SLISH
GWMP
IT IS DONE, MY LUMINARY.
READY...FOR EXTRACTION, KOFF FRENCHIE...

LATER.
NOW THAT BUSHMAN IS DEAD, SHE'S ALL DONE, *EH?*
I HAVE NO CLUE, SIR.
I COULD HAVE...I ***SHOULD HAVE*** STOPPED HER, SAMUELS.
MARC WAS MY BEST FRIEND.
AND IT FEELS LIKE I DID ***NOTHING*** TO AVENGE HIS MEMORY.
DOES THAT MAKE ME A BAD PERSON?
IF YOU'LL PERMIT ME, SIR...
...WE ALL GRIEVE IN OUR ***OWN WAY.***
YOU DID WHAT YOU COULD TO PROTECT MISS MARLENE, BUT THIS WAS ALL ***HER*** CHOICE.
COME...LET'S GIVE HER SOME SPACE.
I'LL PUT THE KETTLE ON.
THANK YOU, SAMUELS.
REST, MY LUMINARY...

WHERE... AM I?
HEY THERE, KID.
IT CAN'T BE...
MARC? MARC, IS IT REALLY YOU?
IT'S ME.
I'VE MISSED YOU, LOVER.
MARC!

WHAT THE--?
MARC...I'M STUCK. I CAN'T MOVE!
PLEASE... HELP ME!
YOU DON'T NEED MY HELP, MARLENE.
YOU'RE ALMOST THERE.
NO, NO, I CAN'T LOSE YOU AGAIN.
YOU'RE NOT GONNA LOSE ME...
I'LL ALWAYS BE HERE...
...JUST TAKE MY HAND...

ARGH!
MARLENE! MON DIEU--
MARLENE ALRAUNE IS GONE!
FOR I AM NOW THE SUN INCARNATE...
...I AM RA!
NO MATTER THE TIMELINE, THE SUN AND MOON WILL ALWAYS RISE.
AND WITH THEIR LIGHT COMES SHADOWS.
HOW ONE ATTENDS TO THOSE SHADOWS DETERMINES THEIR OWN FATE.
SO BE MINDFUL OF THE SHADOWS...
...AND THE LIGHT.
END.

WHAT IF...? DARK
CARNAGE

RAVENCROFT.
ESCAPEE CARNAGE CORNERED IN FACILITY LAUNDRY! DISPATCH REINFORCEMENTS ASAP!
GIVE IT UP, CLETUS! THIS IS GETTING YOU NOWHERE!
NOWHERE? FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO, I WAS LOCKED UP TIGHT IN A SONIC CONTAINMENT CELL--
--AND NOW I'VE GOT A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS SUPPLY OF YUMMY GUARDS' HEADS...

CHOMP!
...TO BITE OFF!
WASTE HIM!
HE'S TOAST, TRAVIS!
BULLETS DON'T WORK ON SYMBIOTES...
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
...YOU SORRY LOSERS!
THWAMM
HEH-HEH... THIS IS MORE FUN THAN STOMPING ON BABY SEALS!
BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAKKA
THIS IS TRAVIS MANY HANDS REPORTING TO RAVENCROFT CENTRAL SECURITY CONTROL...

...ESCAPEE HAS FLED TO LOWER BASEMENT LEVELS, FROM WHICH THERE IS LIMITED EGRESS. SEALING ALL EXITS ON LAUNDRY-ROOM FLOOR, AND INITIATING A SWEEP--
WE ARE SENDING MORE GUARDS, DO NOT LET KASADY ESCAPE THE GROUNDS...
...UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.
NOT A VERY AUSPICIOUS START TO TRAVIS MANY HANDS' APPOINTMENT AS CHIEF OF SECURITY!
I PROMOTED HIM OUT OF R&D, WHERE HE DEVELOPED UPGRADED WEAPONS AND ORDNANCE FOR SPECIAL CONTAINMENTS.
AM I CLEARED TO DEPLOY THE NEW GROUND-TREMOR OSCILLATORS AND SONIC-PULSE GRENADES, MS. PAZZO?
ALL RECALIBRATED FOR TRAUMATIC TONES THAT SHUT DOWN SYMBIOTES?
YES, MA'AM.
YOU HAVE THE GREEN LIGHT.
YOU HEARD THE LADY--WE'RE BRINGING UP THE BIG GUNS!
THIS IS YOUR FAULT, PAZZO! YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN TOO MUCH LEEWAY ON THE HANDLING OF CARNAGE!
YOU'RE IN CHARGE OVERALL, DR. KAFKA! WHERE WAS YOUR OVERSIGHT?

THIS IS THE SUB-BASEMENT WHERE THE OLD FURNACES USED TO BE.
THERE HAS TO BE A SUMP PUMP OR SOME OTHER MEANS OF DRAINAGE--SOME PIPES OR DUCTS THAT CONNECT TO THE OUTSIDE--
--BUT WHERE?
HE'S TRAPPED DOWN HERE! SPREAD OUT AND TAKE HIM DOWN!
YEAH, WELL, THAT WAS--
YOU SAID HE WAS CORNERED IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM!
SLASH!
--COUNTING UNHATCHED CHICKENS?
HE GOT BEHIND US! GO FULL AUTO ON HIM!
SPEK!
PAK!
RAK!
KRAK!
AHA!

TA-TA, CRETINS! YOURS TRULY IS EXITING STAGE LEFT!
SPAK
SPEK
POP
SKAK
FOLLOW HIM!
ARE YOU NUTS? WHO KNOWS WHAT'S DOWN THERE?
BRATTA TAT TAT!
WHOA! ANOTHER SUB-BASEMENT?
LOOKIN' MONDO ANCIENT TOO!
SPANG!
SPWEE!
CONCUSSION GRENADES SHOULD RAIN ON HIS PARADE!
FIRE IN THE HOLE!
WAIT! WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S--
SKOOM

OH MAN-- THAT WAS A REAL BRAIN-RATTLER!
LET'S SEE WHAT THE GROUND-TREMOR OSCILLATOR CAN DO!
NOW WHAT--?
PONK
SKREEEEEEEEEE!
ARRRRRRRRRGH!

"THE OSCILLATOR IS SETTING UP SYMPATHETIC VIBRATIONS IN THE MASONRY..."
...THIS WHOLE SUBBASEMENT IS GOING TO COLLAPSE!
RUN!
IT'S A SUB-BASEMENT...!
WHAT'S IT GONNA COLLAPSE--
KKKK-RRRRRRAASS
INTOOOOOOOOOOOOOoooo

SOME SORT OF GROTTY ANCIENT CAVE SYSTEM...
...AND A TREE THAT WAS PROBABLY A SAPLING WHEN THE FIRST RELIGIOUS CRANKS AND SOCIAL MISFITS ESCAPED HERE FROM THE OLD COUNTRY!
THE DIRT AND ROCKS SURROUNDING IT HAVE SIFTED DOWNWARD INTO THE CAVERNS BELOW--
--THIS TREE HASN'T BEEN EXPOSED LIKE THIS IN CENTURIES!
SOMETHING UP THERE IS GLOWING LIKE SWAMP FIRE.
WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S ENTWINED IN THE TWISTED TREE TRUNK...

WHA--?
IT'S A CORPSE!
AND JUDGING BY THE THREADS, THIS MOOK BIT THE DUST IN THE 1600s.
THIS FREAKY TREE MUST'VE GROWN RIGHT UP THROUGH HIS GRAVE--
WHO ARE YOU?
YOU'RE NOT HIM!!!

IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM.
IS THIS IT? IS THIS ALL THAT MADE IT OUT...?
I SAW THE VAULTING COME DOWN ON TOP OF EVERYBODY BEHIND US, CHIEF.
MANY HANDS! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE--?
THAT WAS RECKLESS AND IRRESPONSIBLE!
ALL OF RAVENCROFT COULD HAVE COME DOWN ON US!
HOLD ON, PAZZO! YOU WERE THE ONE WHO AUTHORIZED THE OSCILLATOR AND CONCUSSION GRENADES! YOU SHOULD HAVE--
WHAT WAS THAT?
I THINK WE WOKE SOMETHING UP DOWN THERE...
SHOOOOOOOM

HE PROMISED ME AN ARMY!
WHO PROMISED YOU AN ARMY?
AND WHO ARE YOU?
BUT THEY ARE NOT READY YET!
I AM CORTLAND KASADY, OF COURSE!
AND HE IS THE STRIDER BETWEEN TIME AND SPACE!
HE WHO HOLDS DOMINION IN THE DARK DIMENSION AND WHO BATTLED THE ANCIENT GODS AND SORCERERS SUPREME...
...THE DREAD DORMAMMU!

IN THE NETHER DOMAIN BETWEEN REALITIES.
SOME INSIGNIFICANT LESSER BEING IS INVOKING MY NAME!
SOMETHING IS AMISS!
SOMEBODY IS MEDDLING WITH THE TIMESTREAM!
ONE OF MY LONG-TERM EFFORTS THAT HAS BEEN INCUBATING FOR CENTURIES HAS BEEN INTERRUPTED!
THIS REQUIRES RIPPING THROUGH THE FABRIC OF SPACE AND TIME...

...TO PERUSE THE SITUATION IN A REALITY I AM CONSTRAINED FROM SETTING FOOT IN.
THIS WRETCHED COSMIC BACKWATER KNOWN AS EARTH.
CORTLAND KASADY--IT IS NOT YET YOUR TIME!
YOU CANNOT BE MY PROXY FOOTHOLD IN THIS WORLD UNTIL ALL IS IN ALIGNMENT, AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE CULTISTS IN THE PODS IS COMPLETE!
THE RIFT MUST BE REPAIRED!
THE TREE MUST BE RESTORED!
CORTLAND KASADY?
MY INFAMOUS ANCESTOR?

THE FISSURE IS WIDENING!
THAT THROBBING LIGHT COMING OUT OF IT-- THAT'S NO EARTHLY SPECTRUM!
ARE THOSE TENTACLES EMERGING...?
HOLY--!!!
OPEN FIRE!
BUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDAB
CARNAGE MUST HAVE TRIGGERED SOMETHING DOWN THERE!
TRAVIS, TAKE THE SECURITY TEAM BACK DOWN THERE AND DEAL WITH IT!
BRING UP THE HEAVY HARDWARE, BUT LAY OFF THE OSCILLATORS AND GRENADES!

IF THE SPACE-TIME TREE IS DAMAGED, MY LONG-LAID PLANS FALL APART!
THIS TREE WAS A CUTTING FROM YGGDRASIL, GRAFTED TO A SCION OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL FROM EDEN, ALONG WITH A CUTTING FROM THE SACRED OAK OF THE DRUIDS.
THE ROOTS ARE PLANTED IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, AND THE UPPERMOST BRANCHES SPREAD INTO THE FUTURE.
YOUR INTRINSIC EVIL NOURISHES IT, KASADY.
THIS TREE WILL ALLOW ME TO BYPASS THE CONTAINMENT SPELLS PUT IN PLACE BY DR. STRANGE AND OTHER SORCERERS SUPREME!
WHEN THE TREE'S SPACE-TIME POWERS ARE FULLY REALIZED, THE SPIRAL CANNIBAL CULTISTS METAMORPHOSING IN THE PODS WILL COMPRISE YOUR ARMY, CORTLAND!
AN ARMY YOU WILL LEAD IN THE NAME OF DREAD DORMAMMU!
HOO-HA! I DON'T LIKE THIS DORMAMMU MOOK AT ALL!
BUT HIS HEAD IS TOO BIG TO BITE OFF, AND BESIDES, IT'S ON FIRE.
OTHERS ARE APPROACHING!

KA CHOW
OPEN SEASON DOWN HERE! IF IT MOVES, KILL IT!
BLOW APART THOSE PODS!
BRADDA BRADDA BRADD
SKLUTCH!
SKLATCH!
ATTACK THEM, MY LITTLE TENTACLED MINIONS!
TEAR THEM LIMB FROM LIMB!
THERE'S THAT NASTY LITTLE TWERP CARNAGE!
BRACKET HIM WITH JACKETED HOLLOW-POINTS!

VIP VIP
BWEE
TZING
TIME FOR ALL GOOD SYMBIOTES TO GET OUT OF DODGE!
MAYBE I CAN FOLLOW THE TREE'S ROOT SYSTEM OUT OF HERE...
"THE FOOLISH CREATURE DOESN'T REALIZE THAT THE ROOTS DESCEND INTO THE PAST!
"IT CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO INTERFERE IN THOSE FUNDAMENTAL EVENTS..."
...TO THAT END, I MUST ACCELERATE YOUR TRANSMUTATION, KASADY--
--TO AN APPROPRIATE FORM FOR THE COMMANDER OF MY LEGIONS! MY CARNAGE!
GO BACK TO 1674, AND DO MY BIDDING!

UNGH!
WHAT IS THIS, ANOTHER CAVE SYSTEM?
WHUMP
THAT'S SOME GNARLY GRAFITTI.
ALMOST LOOKS FAMILIAR SOMEHOW--
SNIFF!
FIRE UP AHEAD.
MEAT COOKING.
WHA--?
AN INTRUDER IS VIOLATING OUR SACRED FEAST!
LET'S KILL HIM AND EAT HIM, FIVE HANDS!

IT'S ONE OF THE POSSESSORS!
A MESSENGER OF THE ELDER GODS...
"...HE HAS COME TO BLESS US WITH HIS PRESENCE!
"IF WE ARE WORTHY, HE WILL EAT US, AND WE WILL BE ONE WITH THE GODS!"
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE GIBBERING ABOUT, BUT I DON'T LIKE IT!
THAT'S NO MESSENGER OF THE ELDER GODS!
THAT'S THE ADVERSARY!
THE TRUE POSSESSOR OF THE LIVING ABYSS HAS RETURNED!
KILL THE INTRUDER! EAT HIM!

OH MY! COULD THIS BE HOSTILE INTENT?
IT SURE AIN'T THE WELCOME WAGON!
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU BLUEBERRY-LOOKING MOTHER#*%& ARE THROWBACKS OR COSPLAYERS OR WHAT--
--BUT I BET YOUR HEADS AND ARMS SNAP OFF JUST LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE'S!

HOO-HA!
RIIIIP!
CHOP!
GA-SHUK
Ker-CHOP

YOU'RE IRREPARABLY DAMAGING THE TIMESTREAM!
THESE SPIRAL CULTISTS ARE MY CORE FOLLOWERS!
YEAH, WELL, THEY SURE COME APART AT THE SEAMS PRETTY EASILY!
FARTHER UP THE TIMESTREAM, THEY WILL BE ENCASED IN PODS TO BE TRANSMUTED INTO MY ARMY OF MINIONS!
GOOD LUCK WITH THAT, TWINKLE-TOES...
TRAVIS MANY HANDS IS UPSTAIRS MACHINE-GUNNING THEM TO SMITHEREENS!
NOW EXCUSE ME WHILE WE BITE YOUR HEAD OFF!
CHOMP
SKRIT
I AM NO HEATHEN--
--I AM GRAND MARSHAL OF DORMAMMU'S LEGIONS!
CRACK

FINISH HIM OFF!
SO WHAT? I'M THE ALL-HIGH POOBAH...
SKUTCH!
SKOOM
SHAKK!
...OF MAXIMUM BADASSERY!
PAYBACK TIME FOR BEING A BUTT-KISSING FLUNKY TO AN INTERDIMENSIONAL LOSER WITH A CHARBROILER FOR A HEAD!

KRUNK
BASHING YOUR BRAINS OUT ON THE CAVE WALL IS SOOOOO SATISFYING!
KILL THE ADVERSARY!
YOU KNOW WHAT STUPID IS?
IT'S SEEING WHAT'S HAPPENING TO EVERYONE AROUND YOU--
--AND NOT REALIZING YOU'RE NEXT!
SKRANCH
LAST ONE STANDING, FIVE HANDS.

CHOMP!
NOM! NOM!
MORE LIKE "NO HEAD"!
AH, THIS IS ONE FINE NOODLE-WHACKER!
JUST THE VERY THING WE NEED...
...TO GO MEDIEVAL ON THIS NASTY TREE'S ROOT SYSTEM!
HACK & SLASH!
CHOP & CUT!

HMMMM-- MANY HANDS AND FIVE HANDS-- IS THERE A CONNECTION?
WE'D RATHER FIGHT OL' TRAVIS MANY HANDS' GOONS THAN THOSE GONZO CULTISTS, ANYWAY!
IF IT'S GOING INTO WITHER-AND-DIE MODE, WE NEED TO GET BACK UPSTAIRS PRONTO!
UH-OH!
MR. TREE DIDN'T LIKE THAT!

NO WELCOME COMMITTEE?
WHAT A PLEASANT SURPRISE--
I'M NOT THROUGH WITH YOU!
OH, IZZATSO--?
ME, ON THE OTHER HAND...
YOU HAVE BROUGHT RUINATION TO MY MAGNIFICENT PLAN--
...AM TOTALLY THROUGH WITH THIS FAMILY REUNION!
--I WILL CRUSH YOU LIKE A--

KKKHHHS
SHUK
IT DID! IT DID!
IT WOPPED YOUR WIDDLE HAND WIGHT OFF!
AWW!
DID YOUR WIDDLE TWEE JUST DIE AND CRUMBLE INTO BLACK ASH?
WE SURE HOPE THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOUR LITTLE HOLE INTO OUR WORLD IS GOING TO COLLAPSE--
KKKHHSSSSSS
I AM NOT PLEASED WITH YOU, CORTLAND.
YOU COULD HAVE RISEN TO GREATNESS.
NOW YOU WILL SUFFER A THOUSAND LIFETIMES OF UNDIMINISHED AGONY.

ZZOOORRNN
ZAP HIM GOOD, BOYS!
THESE NEW CONTROLLED-FREQUENCY SOUND GENERATORS ARE DOING THE JOB!
BACK AT RAVENCROFT.
AS ARE THESE ANIMAL CONTROL POLES WITH NOOSES THAT VIBRATE AT THE PRECISE SYMBIOTE CONTROL FREQUENCY.
ZASH
ZZZP
ZZNN
BERNARD STALKING WOLF SURE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!
THAT'S WHY HE'S BEEN THE CHIEF OF SECURITY HERE FOR SO LONG!

YOU'RE BERNARD STALKING WOLF?
YOU KNOW THAT, CLETUS. AND YOU KNOW I'M CHIEF OF SECURITY AND BRUTALITY RESEARCH FOR RAVENCROFT.
WHAT HAPPENED TO TRAVIS MANY HANDS?
...DID YOU SAY BRUTALITY RESEARCH?
I'VE BEEN HEAD OF BRUTALITY RESEARCH FOR AS LONG AS YOU'VE BEEN HERE, KASADY.
NOW IT'S TIME, ONCE AGAIN, TO SEPARATE YOU FROM THE SYMBIOTE AND CHOP YOU BOTH UP AND WATCH YOU SLOWLY HEAL.
NNNYYYYYYAAAAAHHHHHH!
HE USUALLY ENJOYS THIS PART...
END.

WHAT IF...? DARK
TOMB OF DRACULA

THIS WAS THEN.
ONE MISTAKE.
THAT'S ALL I, DRACULA, LORD OF VAMPIRES, NEEDED HIM TO MAKE.
ONE SMALL MISTAKE...
...THAT WOULD FINALLY COST HARKER HIS LIFE.
LEONS

HARKER DETESTED THE OPERA, BUT HE HAD TO ATTEND. IT WAS THEIR FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY AND *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO* WAS SONYA'S FAVORITE.
HARKER!
AND THAT SHOW LET ME KNOW EXACTLY WHERE HE WOULD BE...AND WHEN.
QUINCY!
CROWDED AISLES. DOORS CLOSED. NO CONVENIENT EXIT. NO PLACE TO RUN.
LOOK AT YOU, HARKER. A RABBIT TRAPPED IN A CAGE, WAITING TO DIE.
QUINCY!!!
LEGS CRUSHED. BACK BROKEN. TELL ME, HARKER...
QUINCY!!!
YAAAAHHHHHH!
...WILL YOUR FALSE GOD GRANT YOU MERCY AND ALLOW YOU TO PEACEFULLY *DIE?*
OR SHOULD I SLOWLY RID MYSELF OF YOU IN THE MOST PAINFUL WAY POSSIBLE?

BUT WHAT IF?
LOOK AT YOU, HARKER. A RABBIT TRAPPED IN A CAGE, WAITING TO DIE.
WAIT.
FRESH BLOOD... IT CALLS TO ME.
IT'S COMING FROM THAT FEMALE.
Doctor Deacon W. Frost Obstetrician
SHE LOOKS TO BE A DELICIOUS APPETIZER. I CAN KILL HARKER AFTER.

DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME. YOUR FATE'S ALREADY BEEN SEALED.
=CHOKE= PLEASE... PLEASE... PLEASE DON'T HURT ME...
DID YOU HEAR WHAT SHE SAID?
GET AWAY FROM HER!
THWAK
AAAGGHHH!
GO AHEAD, WOMAN. RUN. YOU'RE NO LONGER NEEDED.
NOT WHILE I HAVE YOU.
YOUR BLOOD'S ANEMIC, BUT IT WILL DO ITS JOB.
AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR ME TO DO MINE.
UNNHHH...
...UNHHHHH...
...UNNHHHHHHH...

RINNGGG
RINNGGG
RINNGGG
RINNGGG RINNGGG
RINNGGG
UNNHHH...
...UUNNHHHH...
RINNG

DOCTOR FROST. IT'S ANNABETH. VANESSA TARA BROOKS...HER WATER JUST BROKE.
PLEASE, YOU HAVE TO COME NOW.
WHERE IS SHE? SHOW ME.
AH, VANESSA. SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
LET'S MAKE THIS BIRTH A MEMORABLE ONE, SHALL WE?

STOP. GET AWAY FROM HER.
LEAVE HER ALONE.
YOU IDIOTS. FIGHTING ME IS USELESS.
I'M ALREADY DEAD.
AND I NO LONGER NEED TO WASTE MY TIME HERE.
LOOK. LOOK! VANESSA'S BABY...
H-HE'S ALIVE.

TRANSYLVANIA. 27 YEARS LATER.
TO NAVIGATE THE MORTAL WORLD AS IT TRULY IS, THERE CAN BE NO PLACE FOR LIES OR HALF-TRUTHS IN THIS, MY PERSONAL DIARY.
I FAILED TO KILL HARKER. AND THAT IS WHY I FLED BACK TO TRANSYLVANIA.
IT DOES NOT MATTER THAT I CRIPPLED HARKER. THE SLAYER'S STILL BREATHING...
...AND HE IS STILL HUNTING AND MURDERING MY TRUE BELIEVERS.
MY MINDLESS DISCIPLES.
NEWS HAS COME TO ME. HARKER IS NO LONGER ALONE IN HIS MISSION.
BECAUSE OF THE WHITE-HAIRED DOCTOR I BLED NEARLY THREE DECADES AGO--A CHILD WAS BORN WITH BOTH HUMAN AND VAMPIRE BLOOD.
YEARS HAVE PASSED, AND THEY SAY THAT THE *DHAMPIR* MIGHT BE GREATER THAN HUMAN. GREATER EVEN THAN VAMPIRE.
AND HE SEEKS MORE THAN JUST REVENGE FOR HIS MOTHER'S DEATH.
THEY SAY HE WILL SOON HAVE THE POWER TO SLAY ALL THE UNDEAD. PERHAPS EVEN ME.
AND IF THAT IS TRUE, I MUST RETURN TO ENGLAND AND FINALLY RID THE WORLD OF THIS DAMNED SPAWN...
...THIS MONSTER.
LONDON, ENGLAND.

I SMELL MY BLOOD IN YOU, HUMAN.
PASSED FROM THAT WHITE-HAIRED BUTCHER TO YOUR SLUT OF A MOTHER, THEN FINALLY TO YOU.
THEY WERE RIGHT. YOU ARE STRONGER THAN HUMAN.
BUT YOU WILL NEVER BE MORE POWERFUL THAN ME.
YOU'RE ALONE HERE, BLADE. AND I CAN EASILY DESTROY YOU.
BUT I PREFER TO BLEED YOU. TO TURN YOU.
KRAK
NNGGH!
VAMPIRE SLAYER INTO VAMPIRE SLAVE.
YOU'RE ALREADY HALF DEAD.
I WILL FINISH THE JOB THAT FROST FAILED TO COMPLETE.

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'M ALONE?
RACHEL VAN HELSING.
ERIC BROOKS. BLADE.
FRANK DRAKE.
QUINCY HARKER.

AGGHHHH...
IT APPEARS I UNDERESTIMATED YOU.
THAT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
THIS IS NOT OVER.

THIS WORLD HAS CHANGED IN THE YEARS SINCE I WAS LAST HERE.
NOTHING IS HOW IT WAS.
I *RULED* MY OLD WORLD. BUT I FEAR IT WILL TAKE TOO LONG TO DO THE SAME TODAY.
WHICH BRINGS ME TO--
--MY WARRIORS!
COME TO ME.
NOW!

I'VE KEPT THEM HUNGRY.
INSATIABLE.
I MADE THEM SUFFER, SO WHEN AT LAST I RELEASED THEM...
..THEY WOULD WREAK HAVOK ON THE WORLD OF THE LIVING.
I'VE FUELED THEIR RAGE. NOTHING CAN STOP THEM.
NOT EVEN ME.
IT'S TIME. GO AND ENJOY THE FEAST.
30% OFF
I PREPARED IT JUST FOR YOU.
THEY WILL KEEP KILLING UNTIL NOTHING IS LEFT STADNING.
THE LIVING HAVE RULED LONG ENOUGH.
IT IS TIME FOR THE DEAD TO TAKE CONTROL.

I SMELL MY BLOOD IN THE DHAMPIR AS HE SMELLS MINE.
HE WANTS TO KILL ME...
...AND I WANT HIM TO TRY.
I'VE ORDERED MY SLAVES TO LURE HIM TO ME.
YES, ONE BY ONE HE WILL SLAUGHTER THEM EVEN AS THEY LEAD HIM EVER CLOSER TO ME.
BUT THEY ARE MERELY FODDER, REBORN ONLY TO DIE.
THE DHAMPIR IS CLOSER NOW.
THE DHAMPIR IS HERE.

AAGGGGHHHHHH!!!
AND HE IS NOW DEAD.

ERIC? MY GOD. WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN?*
I'M SORRY, SAF. I TRULY AM.
BUT NOW WE CAN BE TOGETHER... FOREVER.
EXCELLENT. EXACTLY AS I COMMANDED.
TURNING SAF'S NOT ON *YOU,* OLD MAN. I'M NOT YOUR DAMN SERVANT.
I'M HERE TO KILL YOU. SLOWLY. AND PAINFULLY.
NO. *YOU'RE* THE ONE WHO WILL *DIE,* BLADE.
AND YET, INSTEAD OF FIGHTING ME, YOU'RE FLEEING.
THAT'S THE SIGN OF SOMEONE WHO KNOWS HE'S ALREADY LOST THE FIGHT.

I AM YOUR BLOOD MASTER. HOW ARE YOU DEFYING ME?
YEAH, WELL. YOU DON'T CONTROL ME, FANGS.
SLITCH
I'M ONLY HALF VAMPIRE.
IN WHICH CASE, I'LL JUST KILL YOU.
AGGHHH!

SWOOSH
DRACULA?
DRACULA?
I'LL NEVER GIVE UP, FANGS.
I'LL FIND YOU IN WHATEVER DARK HOLE YOU'RE HIDING IN.

...YEAH, I GET WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, BLADE. IT'S JUST, I DON'T TRUST YOU.
NONE OF US DO.
WHICH IS WHY I CAME HERE IN DAYLIGHT. SUN'S OUT, BRIGHT AND SHINY.
YOU TAN. VAMPS BURN. THEN THERE'S ME, A HALF-VAMP DHAMPIR. I DO NEITHER.
BUT I SWEAR MY HUMAN SIDE'S IN CONTROL.
SO, WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM US?
I GOT THIS IDEA, ONLY I NEED HARKER TO HELP MAKE IT WORK.
A YEAR OR TWO BACK, YOU GUYS TOLD ME VAMPS CAN HONE IN ON THE BLOOD OF THEIR ORIGINAL ATTACKER.
LOOK, I KNOW I'M MORE THIRD GENERATION, BUT DRAC'S WAITING ON THE OTHER SIDE. I MEAN, IT'S WORTH A TRY.
SO...YOU GUYS WANT TO HELP ME FIND HIM?

TRANSYLVANIA.
CASTLE DRACULA.
WE DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU WERE EVER COMING B--
SILENCE. DO NOT SPEAK UNLESS I TELL YOU TO.
THIS DAMNED WORLD...HUMANS REFUSE TO BOW. SLAVES REBEL AS IF THEY ARE MY MASTER.
WHAT HAPPENED TO MY WORLD?
IGNORE THEM, MASTER. THEY'RE WORTHLESS. BUT I WORSHIP YOU.
THAT IS BECAUSE YOU KNOW YOUR PLACE.
HMMM. TELL ME, AND SPEAK THE TRUTH IF YOU STILL KNOW HOW.
WHY DID I GO AFTER THAT WOMAN INSTEAD OF HARKER AS I HAD PLANNED?
HE WAS MY ENEMY. SHE WAS... NOBODY.
MAYBE SHE DIDN'T PLEASE YOU? BUT I WILL... I...I LOVE YOU.
KRAK
USELESS SYCOPHANT.

ALL OF YOU, COME. OUR ENEMIES ARE AT THE GATE.
I NEED YOU READY TO SLAY THEM ALL.
FOR THE PAST DECADES, I'VE BEEN BUILDING MY ARMY OF THE UNDEAD.
HUNDREDS ARE ALREADY HERE, AWAITING MY COMMANDS. THOUSANDS MORE WILL JOIN THEM SHORTLY.
HUMANS WILL DIE. VAMPIRES WILL RULE.
OUR REVOLUTION BEGINS...

...NOW!
WHAT?
YOU GOT THAT BACKWARD, FANGS.
IT'S YOU BLOODSUCKERS WHO ARE GONNA DIE.

HOW?
YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE FOLLOWING MY BLOOD SCENT.
EXCEPT HARKER MADE SURE YOU WENT THE WRONG WAY.
YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE KILLED HIM WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE.
I WON'T MAKE THAT MISTAKE AGAIN.
WHICH IS WHY I WILL KILL YOU NOW.
WAIT...I FEEL YOUR BLOOD. IT'S FILLING WITH RAGE.
WITH EVERY MOMENT, YOUR HUMANITY WANES. YOU ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE ONE OF MY UNDEAD.
NEVER!

NO VAMPIRE WILL EVER CONTROL ME.
I WILL KILL YOU ALL.
NO, BLADE. YOU DON'T REALIZE IT YET, BUT THE MADNESS HAS ALREADY INFECTED YOU.
IT WILL NOT BE LONG BEFORE YOU CAN NO LONGER RESIST.
NO NONONO NO!
AAAGHHHHH!
HUNHUN HUNHUNH UNHUNHUNH...

HUNHUN HUNHUNH UNHUNH UNH...
HUN HUNHUNH... YOU'LL NEVER KILL ANYONE EVER AGAIN. IT'S OVER FOR YOU AT LAST.
BUT SINCE YOU HAVE AN ANNOYING HABIT OF RETURNING FROM THE GRAVE...
HARKER? THE BIG BAD? WELL, HE WON'T BE BIG OR BAD ANY LONGER.
I'M READY IF YOU ARE.

IF YOU'RE ALL SAFE, *DO IT.*
BLADE, ARE YOU SURE?
YEAH. BUT PLEASE...DON'T CALL ME THAT ANYMORE.
I...I MAY'VE BEEN BORN HALF VAMPIRE, BUT I'M SURE AS HELL NOT GONNA DIE AS ONE.
OKAY. IT'S TIME. NOT GONNA LET MY VAMPIRE SIDE TAKE ME OVER. SO, YEAH, I'M READY. DO IT.
REST IN PEACE, ERIC.
KLIK

SKA-RUNNKK

BLADE... NO. ERIC. HIS NAME WAS ERIC. HE WAS...
YEAH. ALL THAT AND MORE.
FRANK. RACHEL. I THINK WE'RE DONE HERE. WE SHOULD GO.
SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT.
WHAT-IF THAT WERE THE END?

WHAT IF...? DARK: LOKI
VARIANT BY **GABRIELE DELL'OTTO**

WHAT IF...? DARK: LOKI VARIANT BY
EMA LUPACCHINO & **DAVID CURIEL**

WHAT IF...? DARK: SPIDER-GWEN
VARIANT BY **MARC ASPINALL**

WHAT IF...? DARK: SPIDER-GWEN VARIANT BY ROSE BESCH

WHAT IF...? DARK: VENOM HOMAGE VARIANT BY
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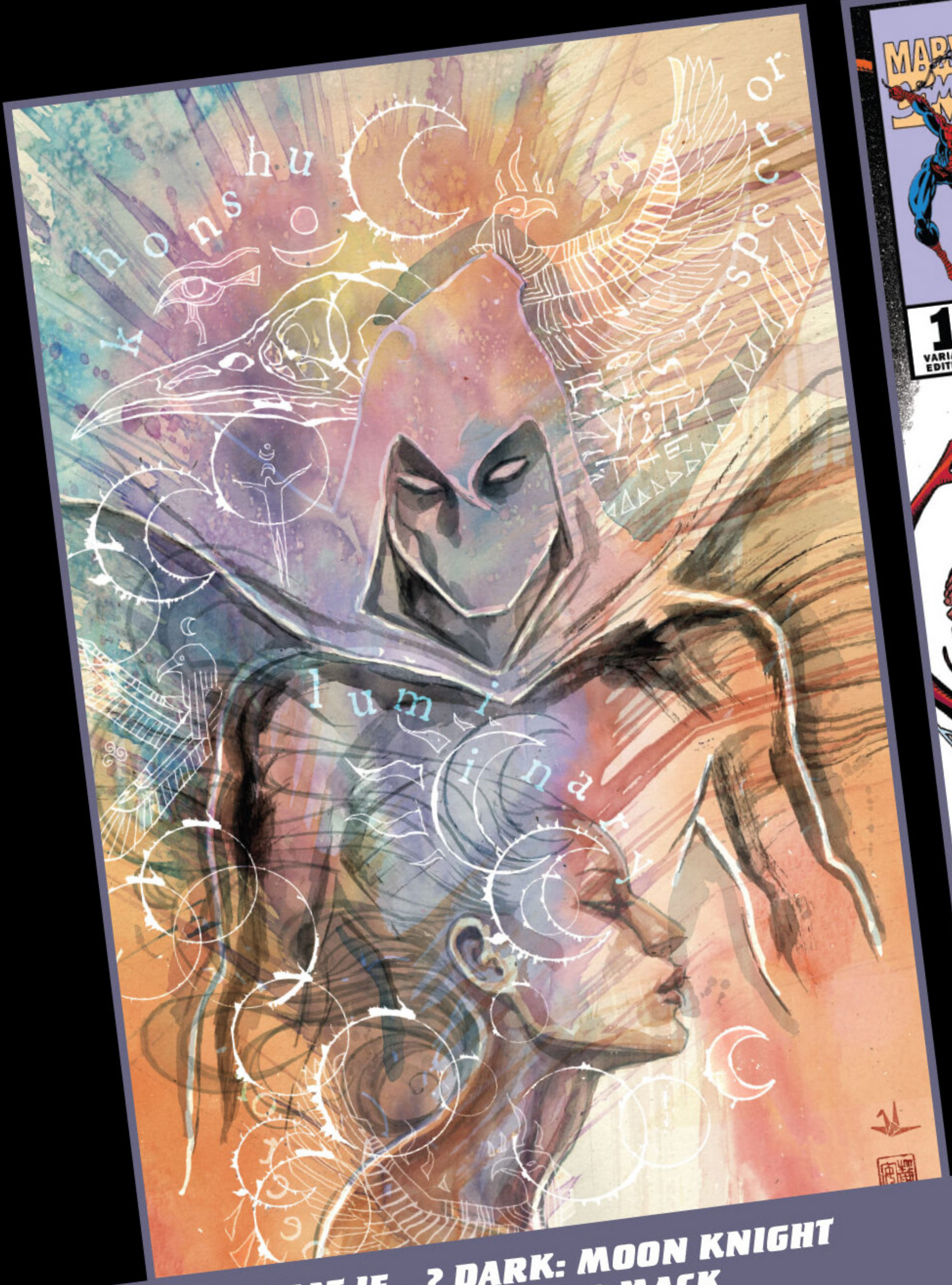
WHAT IF...? DARK: VENOM
VARIANT BY **SKAN**

WHAT IF...? DARK: MOON KNIGHT
VARIANT BY **CORY SMITH** & **RACHELLE ROSENBERG**

WHAT IF...? DARK: MOON KNIGHT
VARIANT BY **CARLOS MAGNO** & **RACHELLE ROSENBERG**



WHAT IF...? DARK: MOON KNIGHT
VARIANT BY **DAVID MACK**

WHAT IF...? DARK: CARNAGE HOMAGE VARIANT BY
NICK BRADSHAW & **RACHELLE ROSENBERG**

WHAT IF...? DARK: CARNAGE VARIANT BY
GREG LAND & **FRANK D'ARMATA**

WHAT IF...? DARK: TOMB OF DRACULA VARIANT BY
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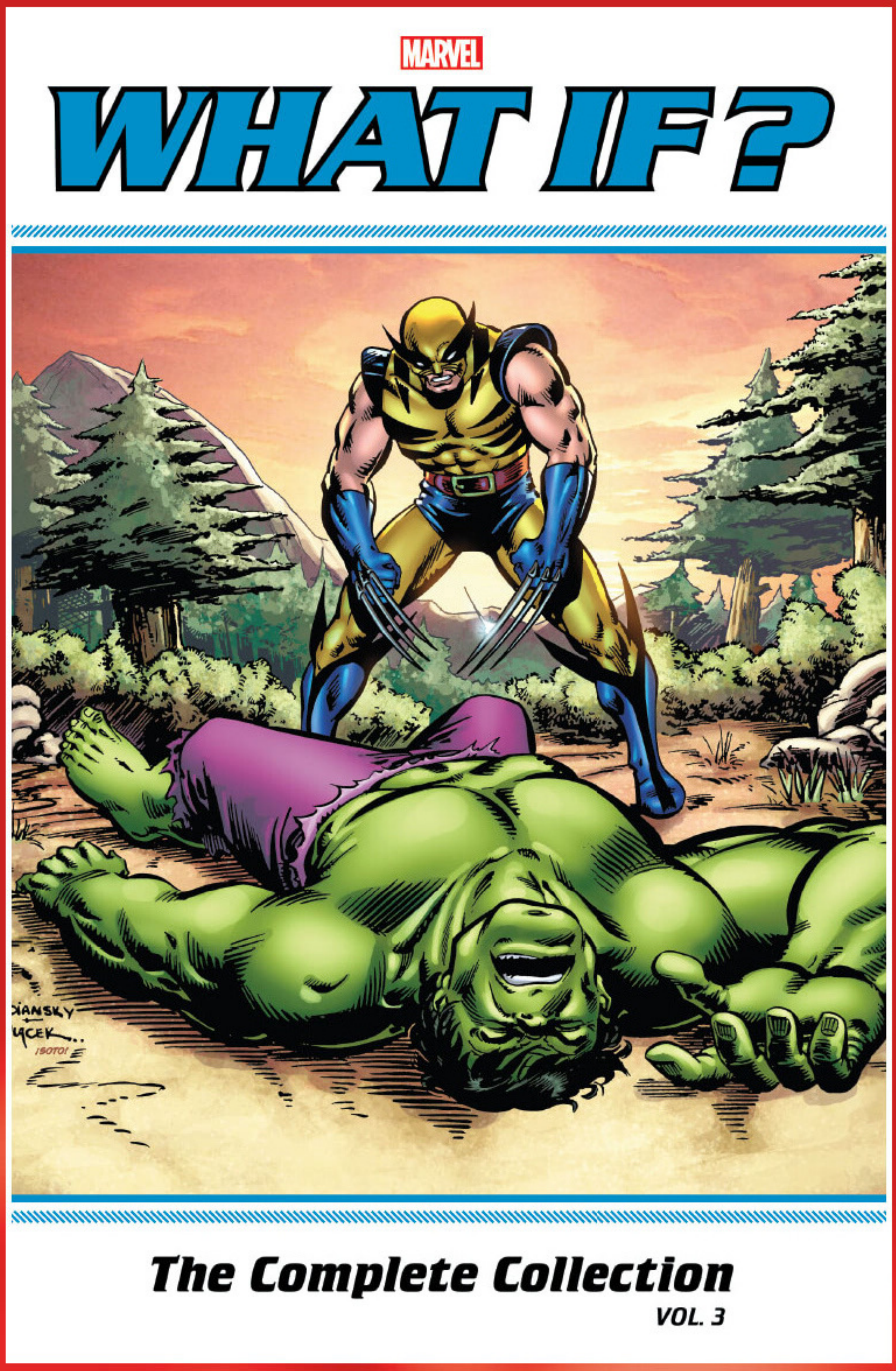

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COLLECTING ***WHAT IF...? DARK: LOKI, WHAT IF...? DARK: SPIDER-GWEN, WHAT IF...? DARK: VENOM, WHAT IF...? DARK: MOON KNIGHT, WHAT IF...? DARK: CARNAGE AND WHAT IF...? DARK: TOMB OF DRACULA*** – BY WALTER SIMONSON, GERRY CONWAY, JODY HOUSER, STEPHANIE PHILLIPS, ERICA SCHULTZ, LARRY HAMA, MARV WOLFMAN, SCOT EATON, RAMÓN F. BACHS, JETHRO MORALES, EDGAR SALAZAR, JOHN McCREA, DAVID CUTLER, CAM SMITH, SCOTT HANNA, ANDREW DALHOUSE, DEE CUNNIFFE, ISRAEL SILVA, ARIF PRIANTO, MIKE SPICER, EDGAR DELGADO AND ANTONIO FABELA.

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